

Dot.  
G.S. Littlefield  
Jan 1909

151  
104

AE 901X  
Willard  
AE 901

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a pronomine. 1. Par. 6. 54. Et hæc מִיִּצְיָהָ  
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Myrm.



Spiritual  
**Desertions**  
Discovered  
AND  
**REMEDIED.**  
BEING

The Substance of divers *SERMONS*  
Preached for the help of dark  
*S O U L S.* labouring under  
Divine withdrawals.

By *Samuel Willard,*  
Teacher of a Church in *Boston.*

*Isa. 35. 3, 4 Strengthen ye the weak  
hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to  
them that are of a fearful heart, be strong,  
fear not.*

*BOSTON* in *New-England*,  
Printed by *B. Green,* and *J. Allen,* for  
*Michael Perry* and *Benjamin Elliot.* 1697





READER,

**W**

*Whoever shall take the  
pains to revolve the  
following Discourse, be  
entreated rightly to  
consider your selves and accordingly ap-  
ply it to your present condition. Either  
you are Strangers to Christ & his Sa-  
ving Grace; & then it will be well  
for you to think, if such may be the case  
of Gods dearly beloved, as is after de-  
clared, what then may you expect at his  
hand, who have him for your enemy?  
And if so, you may be awakened & per-  
suaded to make haste & fly to the Re-  
fuge set before you, it will thus turn to  
your everlasting advantage. Or you  
are gotten into Christ by a Living  
Faith: & then, either you are at pre-  
sent entertained in his Embraces, and  
comforted with the apprehension of his  
love; and then, you will here be com-  
mended.*

med, not to be high-minded, but  
fear: and accordingly, in expectation  
of, to be providing for a dark time  
Desertion, that when it cometh, it m  
not be a strange thing, or find you unpr  
pared. Or you are under the app  
hension of Divine Withdrawings, &  
feel in your selves the very case of such  
as is here decyphered: & for your sake  
more peculiarly was this intended. Tha  
God was pleased to make these Sermon  
profitable to any such Souls, in the De  
livery, let him have the praise: and  
if the desires of such to make them mor  
publick, may be blessed with a like goo  
success, by Gods Blessing: it will Crow  
my highest ambition; which that  
may, I shall follow it with my Earne  
Prayers to the God of all Grace,

Who am,

Less then the least of  
all Saints,

S. W.

Spiritual

# Desertions

Discovered and Remedied.

PSAL. XXX. 7.

*--Thou didst Hide thy Face, and I was  
Troubled.*

**A**Mong all the Dispensations of Gods Providence towards the Children of Men, in this World, there are none more awful and mysterious, than the *Desertions* which he sometimes exerciseth his own withal. Whatsoever trials they meet with in this World, as long as they are

## **Spiritual Desertions**

*go up and down in the light of Gods countenance*, all is well ; but when once that *Host*, nothing can afford them any relief. There are two sorts of Professors in the Visible Church ; *Carnal men*, who never experienced the gracious presence of God with them, and are not therefore sensible of their want of it ; - but if they can enjoy his common goodness, and it pleaseth them, and they seek no farther ; and if they are in trouble at any time, it is only for want of these things : and *Gracious Souls*, who have been made apprehensive of the Love of God, and felt the preciousness of Communion with him ; which if it be at any time withdrawn, they quickly repent it, and it brings them into great distress ; and because it is now a time wherein God seems more than ordinary, to treat his Children with such *Providences* as these, it may not be amiss for the help of these, to treat a little on this Subject. I find by my observation, many of these, are not the most, whom I have occasion to treat with about their Soul Concerns who are serious, to be much in the dark and not a little perplexed about their Spiritual State, and ready to say of themselves

## Discovered and Remedyed.

selves as she, Gen. 25. 22. *If it be so, why am I thus?* I shall therefore endeavour, by Gods help, to open this malady, and prescribe the remedy which he hath laid down in his word. We have this Case here instanced in *David*. That *David* was the Pen-man of this *Psalm*, appears by the *Title*; the occasion of it is also intimated there: *at the Dedication of his House*: but Interpreters are at a loss about the proper meaning of it. Some read it, *A Psalm and Song of David at the Dedication of the [or that] House, viz. the Temple*, which though he lived not to see dedicated, yet, as a *Prophet*, he prepared this Song then to be Sung. Others read it as our *Translation*, and suppose that it intends *the Dedication of his own House*; though some observe that all the *Hebrew Expositors* carry it in the former sense. The word translated *Dedication*, properly signifies, *to initiate, or introduce a thing into its use*. When it is applied to men, it intends the *Catechizing* or instructing them in that which they should follow; so it is used, *Prov. 22. 6. Train, &c.* when used for other things, it intends the appointing them to their first use, and the service we designed

### **Spiritual Desertions**

ed them for; and it seems the *Israelites* when they Built an House, did solemnly consecrate it to the Service of God; engaging that he should be Served in it, and it should be kept pure from *Idolatry* and *Debauchery*: though with what *Ceremonies* they did it, or whether with any at all, the Scripture is silent, *Deut. 20. 5*. But likely they did it with *Prayer*, in which they obliged themselves to God, that if he would continue them in their *Dwellings*, he should be faithfully Served therein; and if this course were used instead of riotous, or at best but civil *House-warmings*, it would favour more of *Christianity*. We may see an instance of *David's* Dedication of his house, in *Psal. 134*. whether this in the *Psalms* before us were when he first built it, or after it had been defiled by *Absalom's* brutishness, is disputed. Others suppose that it intends only a *Psalms* composed to the *Tune* of the Song used in the dedicating of Houses: and the rather, because there is not any thing particularly mentioned of his house in the *Psalms*. However, as to the matter of the *Psalms*, it seems to be excellently accommodated to *David's* return to his house, after the Rebellion



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of *Absalom* was quieted. The *Psalm* is a *Psalm of Praise or Thanksgiving*: in it,

1. *David* sets himself to bless God for the wonderful deliverance he received of him, to *verse 4*.

2. He calls upon the Saints or People of God to joyn with him in this work, *verse 4*. and to help them in it, he gives them an account of the whole case, which consists of four particulars; which he introduceth with a general observation to be relied on by all that fear God, *verse 5*.

1. The Ill Improvement that he had made of his prosperous state, *verse 6*. and that was to *Carnal Security*; though he still acknowledged God in it, *verse 7*. *David* forgot himself; and carnal confidence is usually followed with temptations which are too hard for us: and we may think that he hath a tacit respect to the matter of *Uriah*.

2. The sudden change that beset him on this, *Text*.

3. What course he took when under such a condition; he set himself to Prayer, to *verse 11*.

4. The blessed event of it, *ver. 11, 12*. The words of our *Text* then contain

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the second of these remarks, or the sudden change that befel the *Psalmist*, who he least suspected it: he was gotten out of his troubles, settled in his Kingdom with great tranquility; and now he thought his troubles were at an end, & he should spend the rest of his time in ease; and yet the rather because he maintained the Worship of God in his house, and acknowledged God to be the author of his Settlement: and on a sudden the Scene is altered, and he is again plunged into as deep distress as ever. In these words observe two things:

1. The *Occasion*, or that from which this distress did proceed; *thou dist build thy face*. What is intended by it, may be afterwards considered.

2. The *Effect* of it, or the distress itself, *I was troubled*. The words in this *Conjugation* in which it is here used, signifies a sudden and grievous consternation on the mind, occasioned by some unexpected very great evil that assaults man, and leaveth him without counsel or power to escape it, and so puts him into a panick fear: and so it very fully expresseth the present case. Hence

DOCT

DOCTRINE.

*When God at any time hides his face from his own Children, it is very troublesome and terrible to them.*

There are two Propositions contained in this Doctrine, which may be taken notice of, viz.

1. *That God may, and sometimes doth hide his face from his choicest Servants.*

2. *That his so hiding from them is very troublesome and terrible to them.*

Of these distinctly.

Proposition 1. *That God may, and sometimes doth hide his face from his choicest Servants.*

*David is an instance for this, of whom we have an account in the Scriptures, that he was a man after Gods own heart, one whom God had chosen peculiarly to himself, with whom he had made a Covenant well ordered in all things, and sure: and yet we have him here asserting, this,*

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this, and how frequently is he, in the *Psalms*, bemoaning of himself by reason of such a Dispensation? *Psal.* 10. 1, 2, 3, and many the like.

In prosecution of this Proposition, we may Enquire,

1. When God may be said to hide his face from his own?

2. What it is that procures this hiding of his face from them?

3. For what end or design doth he hide his face?

4. To what degrees this may arrive?

5. How long this may be?

1. When God may be said to hide his face from his own.

A. The Expression is *Metaphorical* and allusive, and ascribed to God after the manner of men. *God is a Spirit*, and hath no body, and consequently no members or parts of a body; wherefore he assumeth such in the Scriptures, he speaks to us in our own language, and is to be spiritually understood. Now the face is the most conspicuous part of the body, and is usually bare and open to view. The shewing of the face to any is therefore frequently used for kindness, freedom, and familiarity; and

**Discovered and Remedied. 13**

the hiding of it is a token of estranged-  
ness and displeasure ; 2 Sam. 14. 24. *let*  
*him not see my face* : Hence David prays  
for Gods favour in such words, Psal. 4. 6.  
*Lift up the light of thy Countenance upon us.*  
Gods hiding of his face then from his  
Creatures, intends his withdrawing from  
them these sensible or experimental dis-  
coveries of his benignity to them, which  
sometimes they enjoyed ; or his withold-  
ing from them those manifestations of  
himself which they long for, and which  
he hath been ordinarily wont to bestow  
upon others : for though hiding do pro-  
perly intend *a withdrawing out of sight*,  
yet it also includes in it *a keeping out of*  
*sight*, and not shewing one self. God is  
sometimes said to hide his face from  
*Sensitive Creatures*, Psal. 104. 29. which  
intends his Providential withholding from  
them the support of their lives. He is  
also said to hide his face from *Wicked*  
*men*, Deut. 32. 20. and that may be both  
on a *temporal* and a *spiritual* account ;  
when he brings trouble upon them, and  
affords them no relief or comfort in it.  
But when it is spoken of *True believers*,  
it then more peculiarly intends those  
*Spiritual Desertions*, which they are  
brought

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brought into, and left under; or those withdrawings of his manifesting himself to them in his *special favour*, the enjoyment whereof is their very life and consolation. The end of *Union* unto *Christ* in *Conversion*, is for *Communion* with him; in which there is a mutual commerce maintained between him and us, wherein he imparts to us of his *Grace*, and enableth us to return to him *Service and Praise*. Whatsoever therefore either impedes or obscures this *Communion*, belongs to the hiding of his face, or the *Desertion* of which we are now considering: and hence.

1. A Christian may be without outward comforts, and ordinary helps, and yet not under the hidings of Gods face. God can take away from his Children the Comforts of this life, their health, their strength, relations, estate, liberty, and make up all this in the light of his countenance. Was it not so with *David*, when in the *Valley of the Shadow of Death*, *Psal.* 23. 4. and with the *Prophet*, when the *Figs tree did not blossom*, &c. *Hab.* 3. 17, 18. yea, he can take away the *Ordinances* themselves from them, which are the ordinary way of their *Communion* with him,

## Discovered and Remedied. 15

him, and still be a little Sanctuary to them, Ezek. 11. 16. God therefore giveth them that gracious encouragement in the want of all, Isa. 41. 10. *Fear not, for I am with thee, &c.*

2. He may enjoy all the outward benefits of the Covenant, and yet not enjoy the face of God in them; he may partake in the fulness of these, and yet God be withdrawn from them; it is one thing to enjoy the means, and another thing to have God in them, manifesting himself to us, by his gracious co-operation with them; and these are separable: out of doubt *David* was sensible of this, when he put up that request to God, Psal. 51. 11, 12. *Take not thy holy Spirit from me; restore to me the joy of thy Salvation.*

3. There may be real Communion maintained between God and the Soul, and yet a Child of God be at a loss about it. It may be carried on so secretly, as that not only others may be ignorant of it, but the Christian himself may have great doubtings about it. God is never nearer to his people than at some times when they think he is farthest from them; *he brings them in a way that they*

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*they know not, and leads them in paths that they have not known, Isa. 42. 16.* he stealeth his grace into them, and draws forth the exercise of it, and carries them heavenward, when they are complaining that they cannot see him nor find him. Was it not so with the Spouse, *Cant. 5.* never was her Grace in more vigorous exercise than at that time, when she complains that her beloved had *withdrawn himself.*

4 All those withdrawals whereby God leaveth his Children in the dark about their spiritual condition and concerns, belong to this *Desertion, or biding of his face.* God may be, yea is at work for them in his greatest retirements, but they want the apprehension of it: When therefore they complain as he, *Lam. 3. 2. he hath led and brought me into darkness, but not into light.* Now they are so far deserted; and this is to be read in the Dispensation of himself to them in his Providence on a spiritual account: and there are many respects in which he thus doth; some of the principal whereof we may here take notice of; *viz.*

1. When God not only brings outward troubles on his people, but with them withholds Consolation, and lets in Terrors



## Discovered and Remedied. 17

**Terrours.** Outward Afflictions indeed are not a Rule of our judgment; since they may befall the most dearly beloved of God. and a beam of Gods love in the Soul, will make them all appear *light and momentary*, as *Pauls* did for this reason to him, 2 Cor. 4. 17. But God is often wont to use them as expressions of his anger, and witnesses of his displeasure: and they are frequently to to his own; the *Rods* with which he corrects them; and whilst they can see a fathers hand in them, they can take them well: but when they are made to apprehend him coming *as an enemy* against them, and his *terrors make them afraid*, now they see not any Consolation in his countenance, but wrath; thus it was with *Job* in that distress of his, on which account he uttereth that complaint, Chap. 13. 24. *Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?*

2. When God withdraws from his Ordinances, and they apprehend not that wonted power of his accompanying; to give them their efficacy. Time was when they never went to an Ordinance, but they met with Christ there, and received some token of his presence with them,

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them, and acceptance of them: their hearts were touched, their affections raised, the Word and Sacrament left impressions on them, and they were quickened, resolved, enlivened, strengthened, and comforted by them: but now it is not so; but on the other hand, they go with a great deal of listlessness, and attend with deadness and wandering, and come away rather more stupid and out of order as to what is good: and if God were there, would it be so? *David therefore longs that he may see God as he hath seen him in his Sanctuary, Psal. 63. 3. and for this it is that he values the Ordinances, Psal. 27. 4. to behold the beauty of the Lord.* The want then of this felt, is a dark dispensation.

3. When they set about Duty, and find that *assistance* withheld, which they needed, for want of which they fail in the performance; *when they would do good evil is present*, and that not only to withstand, but to *Captivate them*, Rom. 7. 22, 23. they would pray earnestly and enlargedly, but their affections are cold, &c their hearts are strained; they would pray believingly, but are shaken with doubting, and ready to let go their hold  
on

**Disobedient and Inconstant. 19**

on the promise; they would hear intently, but their hearts are wandering, and steal away from them, into the corners of the earth ere they are aware, and the like in other holy duties; and now what miserable work do they make in their best performances? they feel themselves like *Sampson* when his locks were cut, *Judg. 16. 20.*

4. When they are left to themselves in an hour of Temptation, and so are driven away by it into Sin. God doth not only suffer Temptation to assault them, for so he had often done, and given them a glorious victory and triumph over it, and so brought them off conquerours; and therein witnessed his admirable presence with them: but they have been tript up by it, and carried down the stream of it, as it was with *Hezekiah*, when God left him to himself, *2 Chron 32. 31.* and *Peter* when he cowardly denied his Lord; and many others in Scripture record; and this brings them to a loss in their thoughts; and they are brought to conclude, if the Lord had been with me, it would not have been thus; if he had not been withdrawn, I had not been thus defeated.

*S. Mose*

5. More especially when they are left to some more gross and Conscience wasting sins, and their Conscience is hereupon let loose to terrify them. *David* prays especially to be kept from presumptuous sin, *Psal.* 19. 13. when therefore they are at any time overtaken with such a sin as is against the light of nature, and the plain precept of the Word of God, such as *David's Adultery and Murder* were, such as that of the incestuous *Corinthian*, *1 Cor.* 5. 1. this looks so much like a spot that is not of Gods Children, that it occasioneth very much darkness in them; and though often for the present such a sin bewogs and stupifies their Consciences, and they are insensible of it, yet when God roweth their Consciences, and maketh it to reflect on the sin, and sets it home with its aggravations, it becomes very dreadful to them: we may be satisfied how it was with *David* on this account by many passages, in *Psal.* 51. and they are ready to be swallowed up with the remorse of it, as he, *2 Cor.* 2. 7. *lest he be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.*

6. When their own Evidences are so blurred that they cannot read them. The  
Christians

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Christians evidences for his good estate are within him; they are the special fruits of the Spirit, which he produceth in none but the Regenerate: called the *things that accompany Salvation*. Heb. 6. 9. From these he is to argue to his being under the promise, because thereby the condition of it is fulfilled in him. But, though these are in him, yet he cannot find the reality of them: he cannot distinguish his *Faith* from *Presumption*, his *Repentance* from that which is *Legal*, his *Obedience* from that which is *False* and *Hypocritical*: and this makes him afraid that nothing is right in him; that he hath only a shadow and not the substance, which makes him to walk in the dark, as they in, *Isa. 50. 10*. And he calls the truth of every thing into question, and dares to fix upon nothing.

7. When the Spirit of God withholdeth his Testimony from confirming their evidences. Though the evidences be in us, yet the confirmation of it must be by his Testimony. *Rom. 8. 16*. *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirits*. Whereas he doth not now so witness, but leaveth us in suspense, and though we cannot deny, yet we dare not conclude, but

are tossed and turmoiled about it, and full of fears, thinking that if all were right, he would surely set his hand and seal to it, and let us discern it. Thus therefore *David* deprecates in the forecited *Psal. 51. 11. Take not thine holy Spirit from me.*

8. When we want these joys in exercise which are the priviledge and duty of the Children of God. The *Apostle* could say, *1 Pet. 1. 8 To rejoyce with joy unspeakable.* And the *Psalmist* prays, *Psal. 106. 5 That I may rejoyce with the gladness of thy nation.* And we are bidden to be always in the exercise of this, *1 Thes. 5. 16. Rejoyce evermore.* And *Phil. 4. 4. Rejoyce in the Lord always* Whereas, though he hath some hope, and is not altogether abandoned, yet he is full of trouble; his heart is heavy, he is a stranger to this joy, and goeth up and down with a grieved Spirit, and in the bitterness of his Soul. Such is the *Psalmist's* moan, *Psal. 42. 3. 9. My tears have been my meat day and night, whiles they continually say to me, where is thy God? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy.*

9. When, in this condition, they pray to God, and can find no answer to their

**Discouragements and Remedies. 29**

prayers and tears. It is true, he many times answers them graciously, when they do not understand him: however they are to their own sense unanswered, they do not find those returns which they hoped for, and esteemed to be proper for their condition, though they cry incessantly, and mourn after God ardently. So the Psalmist uttered himself, *Psal.* 22. 2. *O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou bearest not me, & in the night season, & am not silent.* Nay, it may be to their apprehension, God answers them in anger, and gives them the most discouraging returns; as he expostulates, *Psal.* 80. 4. *How long wilt thou be angry at the prayers of thy People?* And *Job* 30. 20, 21. *I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me, I stand up, and thou regardest me not, thou art become cruel to me.* And he apprehends that God rejects his petitions, as, *Lam.* 3. 8. *When I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.*

10. When discouragements oppress, & almost over bear them. Their fears are so great, and their hopes run so low, that they are ready to give up all for gone, and are at the very brinks of despair. Thus it was with David, *Psal.* 31. 22.

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I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes. And the Prophet, Jonah 2. I said, I am cast out of thy sight. And the Church, Lam. 3. 18. I said, mine hope and my strength is perished from the Lord. Thy very thoughts of God trouble him, and he is calling in question every thing of the Covenant. Psal. 77. 3, 7, 8, 9. And he cries out as, Psal. 38. 10. Mine bones pain, my strength fails; as for the light of mine eyes, it is also gone from me. And he is afraid that he shall not hold out a moment longer, but be overwhelmed. And these are the fruits and evidences of *spiritual Desertions*, and such as, the Scriptures cited under them do make it appear, that they may befall the best men in this life.

2. What it is that procures this hiding of his face from them?

A. In general, this must be sought for in them: and for a clue to lead us in the search, that we be not mistaken about it, let me offer the following **Conclusions**.

1. That if it were not for sin the Lord would be none of these Desertions falling the People of God. When God

ma



## Discovered and Remedied. 25

made man in his integrity, there was an entire friendship and intimacy between them; there was no cloud to hide his face from him: nor shall there be any more of this when we come to the General Assembly of the Spirits of just men made perfect. This began upon mans Apostasy, which made a separation; and though it remains with the Children of God through this life, yet it shall continue no longer; and the reason why they experience it now is because they have sin abiding with them. The Psalmist hereupon presumes, *Psal. 17. vs. 1* *I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.* And if you ask, why must they meet with such dark dispensations here? the best answer is, because they carry a body of Death about with them, and till they put it off, it is like to be so.

2. That Spiritual Desertion, of its own nature, belongs to the Curse of the first Covenant. It is in it self a great evil, and of a worse sort, being Spiritual. It belongeth to the Death that was denounced in the threatening, *Gen. 3. 17.* And it is the greatest affliction that Gods Saints meet with in this life, as will be after made manifest. *Desertion will*

will be of the sorest Plagues that shall befall the Damned in hell; it will be the quintessence of their misery, that they shall depart from Gods presence, and never see his face shining on them: the very sentence contains this in it, *Matth. 25. 41. Depart ye cursed.* And we are told, *2 Thes. 1. 9. They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; and if in his presence there is fullness of joys, Psal. 16. 11. then in a separation from it, there must be fullness of sorrows.* Every distance from God is a misery; and if so, then to be utterly forsaken of him is the upshot of intellect, *Hos. 9. 12. Wo unto them, when I shall depart from them.* Now all misery came into the world by the Curse.

3. That the Desertions of the Children of God, are no part of Revenging Justice, as they befall them: They are to indeed so the wicked, because they are under the dispensation of the old Covenant: but believers are not under the Law, but under Grace, *Rom. 6. 14.* And in the new Jerusalem, there is no Curse, *Rev. 22. 3.* God, in infinite wisdom, seeth meet to continue many of the evils themselves upon his own, which sin introduced into the

### Discovered and Remedied. 271

world. but he hath taken away the sting and poyson out of them; and as a skillful Physician turns them into Medicine, and they belong to the *all things that shall work together for good to them that love God, Rom. 8, 28.* & come into the Saints inventory. 1 Cor. 3. 22. *All is yours.* For it is a truth, that all the dispensations of God to them that are in Christ, as all believers are, are to bring about the great design of fitting them for the glory to which they are appointed. Besides, 'tis certain, that whatsoever belongs to the execution of the revenging Justice of the first Covenant, hath been born by Christ himself, on the account of all for whom he was made a Sacrifice, and so cannot again be exacted upon them.

4. That God useth much of his Sovereignty in the *Desertion* that he exerciseth his people withal. He indeed hath holy ends and purposes in all that he doth, as will be seen in the next enquiry: he never useth his Sovereignty separate from his Wisdom: though he is arbitrary in what he doth, yet he never forgets to carry on his own Glory and his Peoples Salvation in and by it. However, he

useth a liberty, of which he will not give us an account, and for which we can assign no other reason moving him, but because it so seemed good to him. Hence, all his Children are not exercised alike here-with, neither as to kind, nor as to degree. Some walk in the dark, while others go up and down in the light. Nay, the most watchful and circumspect Saints may meet with these; he that fears the Lord, and obeys the voice of his servant, may walk in darkness, and have no light, Isa. 50. 10. And so there is no room left us to censure others on this account: we ought not to be high minded, but *fast*.

5. That God visits them with these never but when they need them. It is a truth universal concerning the Children of God, 1 Pet. 1. 6. *Ye are in heaviness if need be*: which need we are not to measure by our shallow understandings, as if God could not, by his absolute power, bring them another way to Glory; but this is the way which his infinite Wisdom hath contrived, in which to lead them to it: and there are those occasions for these, which make them very convenient at such a time, which

Discovered and Remedied. 29

he knows, though we are at a loss about them. God therefore so bespeaks his deserted people, *Jer. 29. 11. I know the thoughts that I think towards you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil.* And there is a time coming when they also shall see & adore, as Christ to him, *Job. 13. 7. What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*

6. That it is usually some sin of theirs which grieveth his Holy Spirit, that procures these Desertions. His Spirit is very tender, and he may be grieved, why else are we so cautioned against it? *Eph. 4. 30.* And there is nothing but some sin and folly of ours that so doth; and such as by which we have put some special affront upon him; for he is pitiful, and knows our frame, *Psal. 103. 14.* Now if we do so grieve him, we must expect that he will show his resentment of it in some way or other; and in what more suitable, than in that which shall put us to grief, though so as shall bring us back to him by a kindly Repentance, and so make up the breach, and remove the strangeness that was procured by our sin? Hence we find David to be once and again, under a sense of Gods

withdrawing, bitterly complaining of  
 sins, as the occasion thereof. *Psal.* 3  
 10. & 38. *begin.* So that there can be  
 nothing more proper for us, when we meet  
 with such things in Providence, than  
 to call our selves to a severe account, and  
 strictly enquire, what we have done.

3. For what end or design doth God  
 hide his face?

*A.* In general, we may be assured that  
 God always aims at his own Glory, and  
 his Childrens good, when he so treats  
 them. That God must design his own  
 glory by it is certain, for that is his  
 end in all his works; and it is inconsis-  
 tent with his Holiness that he should  
 otherwise; and that he hath connected  
 with this in an inseparable subordination  
 the best good of his people, is a truth  
 of *Divine Revelation*; inasmuch as having  
 appointed them to Salvation, for the Glo-  
 rifying of his Rich Grace in them, he con-  
 ducts them by his mature Counsel, in the  
 right way to it, so he presumes  
*Psal.* 73. 24. *thou shalt guide me by thy*  
*Counsel, and afterwards receive me to Glory.*  
 So that there is no one passage in  
 but what was before contrived and laid

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**Discovered and Remedied.** 31

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out in Infinite Wisdom. Now the discovery of wisdom is not only in chusing a worthy end, but also in making a choice of fixable means, and rightly applying them for the obtaining of the end. These hidings belong to this conduct, and the design of them is to be discovered by the way in which God makes them to serve thereunto. Hence a Child of God may say of every desertion he meets with, as *Paul* in another case, *Phil. 1. 29. I know that this shall turn to my Salvation*; and as *Job*, chap. 23. 10. *when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold*; and this Rule may help us in the particular enquiring into the design of God upon this account, in which we must always have an eye to these five Rules that can never fail us.

1. That these withdrawals are not from Gods hatred, but his love; they are ready to suspect this, and say, as *Psal. 77. 7, 8, 9. will the Lord cast off for ever?* &c. but it is their infirmity, *verse 10. they think, because he hides himself, he loves them not*; but indeed he doth therefore so hide, because he loveth them. *Zion* thinks that now she is forgotten and forsaken; but God assures her that it is far other;

otherwise, *Iſa.* 49. 14, 15. and God grieved that his people should think there is any defect or decay in his love, because he so carries to them.

2. That though God love them, yet he may be angry at them, and withdraw from them in anger. Love and Hatred are contrary, but Anger is subordinated, and may be employed by either of them; there is an anger of love as well as of hatred. A Father hath a dear love for his Children, but he may be very angry at him, and manifest it too in severe tokens. God can be provoked, so as to withdraw from his own; and he so declares, *Iſa.* 54. 8. *In a little wrath I hid my face from thee.*

3. Yet this anger is managed by love, and shall work accordingly. Gods displeasure at his Children shall do nothing but what love directs; if then he hides away from them in anger, it is because he seeth it is best for them: it shall not extinguish, no, nor diminish, no, nor so much as intermit the operation of his love towards them, but shall always do loves work: when therefore he afflicts it is in *faithfulness*, as *Pſal.* 119. 75.

4. That God may withdraw from his people



## Discovered and Remedied.

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God is not angry; they indeed have cause to be afraid of some provocation given, and accordingly to make diligent search: but God sometimes withdraws from them, when there is no special provocation given him. Job had great desolations, as hath been observed; and yet God himself testifieth of him, that there was none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, Job 1. 8. and the Church could say, in Psal. 44. 17. *all this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee, nor dealt falsely in thy Covenants:*

5. That there is ever something in the condition of his people, for which these withdrawings are suitable; they are in such a posture as is best for the glory of God, and their everlasting welfare, that they met with such a dispensation. And now let us take notice what that is, that so we may be helped to discover Gods special design herein; and this may be reduced to three heads.

1. God doth it for their chastisement and amendment. *Divine Corrections* are one part of Gods dispensations to his people here, Heb. 12. 6. *whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son*

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whom he receives: and the aim of this is the doing of them good; let us then observe how he makes these desertions serve to this purpose in a few particulars.

1. Gods Children are sometimes overtaken with sins that both dishonour him and wound them; if they were not liable to folly, they would not need Correction. Nor is their folly restrained by lesser infirmities, but sometimes breaks out into more bold transgressions. God promises such a thing may be, and for this reason threatens a Rod in case, Psal. 81. 30. &c. sometimes Gods name is blasphemed by what they do, as it was by David's folly. 2 Sam. 12. 14. and their own bones are broken, as he complains, Psal. 51. 3. there are some such wounds as these which the most eminent Saints on Scripture record have gotten to themselves though more seldom.

2. And they very often grow dull and remiss in the exercise of their graces. Carnal Concupiscence that remains in them, and the occasions and temptations they meet with in the world, are apt to cool their gracious frames, and bring them into deadness, so that though Grace be alive at the root, yet it doth not flourish.

# **Distresses and Remedies.**

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rish; there is fire on the hearth, but it is covered with embers; they grow drowsy and lukewarm; it was so with the *Spouse* Cant. 5. 3. and with the *Church of Sardis*, Rev: 3. begin. and usually their being exposed to the fore-mentioned sins begins here, it is generally supposed that *David* was in such a posture, when he was surprized in the house top; 2 Sam. 11. begin.

3 The glory of God, and their good, are concerned in their recovery. It is not consistent with either of these for them to be left always in such a condition as they have brought themselves into by such things. Gods name suffers not a little by the former, nor is there any way for them to repair the injury done to it, but by a soaking repentance; and their work lies by both; and there is no progress made in the business where in they are to work but their own salvation. For the reparation therefore of both these, it is requisite, that they be made to see and lament their folly, and be rowzed up to their business: and Gods *Covenant Faithfulness* engageth him to do this for them.

4. Many

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4. Many times other means to reclaim them are unsuccessful. God useth other courses, and they remain stupid and senseless. *David* doubtless lived under the enjoyment of, and attendance upon the Ordinances of God, and yet he is stupid and remorseless till the *Prophet* cometh. It is too awfully observable that Godly men, under some eminent decays, content themselves with formality, and feel not their malady, till God comes in some more awful way to bring them to this sense.

5. Hence God exerciseth them with such Desertions for their awakening, humbling and healing: and when he so doth, and toucheth their Consciences, then they resent them, and are brought to themselves. When God hid his face from *David*, he then *Cryeth*, and *Confesseth*, and begs for the *Restoring of his Spirit*; and he obtaineth it. *Psal.* 51. When *Christ* came to his beloved with sweet allurements, she wantonly neglected and rejected them, but when he put in his finger, and left a touch behind, and then withdrew, now she is quickened, her grace begins to stir and revive, and she rests not till she hath gotten the sight of him again. *Cant.* 5.

# Discovered and Remedied. 37

2. God doth it for the exercise and tryal of their Grace. That this is one end of Gods dark dispensations to his people, we are told in, *Deut. 8. 16. To prove thee.* And we may see the reason or ground of it in these things.

1. God hath put his Graces into his people for exercise, in which he is to be glorified. The Creatures last end is the Glory of God: and that man may glorify him, he must have grace to do it: and he only glorifieth God by the exercise of these Graces, without which he would receive them in vain. This is the fruitfulness by which Christ tells us, that *His Father is glorified, Joh. 15. 8.*

2. This exercise of Grace is made illustrious when it is put to the tryal. Grace is like gold, which is discovered by the tryal of it, both as to the reality and excellency of it: and what saith he? *Joh. 23. 10. When he hath tryed me, I shall come forth as gold.* By these the truth of Grace is made manifest; if there be any activity in it, it will now show it self: and the strength of it will now be proved, whether it be weak or strong. When Peter was upon the waters, he exercised his faith, but so as to shew that he had but little, *Mat. 14. 31.*

3. Temptations are suited for Tryal. And here by Temptations I understand all sorts of afflictions. Prosperity indeed hath no Temptations in it, but the Spirit of God more peculiarly puts this title upon afflictions, because hereby we are brought into difficulties wherein it will be proved whether God or any other be our object of hope and trust, the Apostle therefore tells us that *our manifold Temptations are for the tryal of our faith*, 1 Pet. 1. 6, 7. Now we are in the dark, and many will say, where is your God? Besides, there are some Graces that are peculiarly suited for, and the proper occasion for the exercise of them, is from an hour of Temptation, such as patience, meekness, submission, &c.

4. Desertions belong to these Temptations. And indeed grace is never put to the proof, as when God hides his face from us. To believe in a withdrawing God, to be following hard after him, when he seems to be going away from us; to hold him the faster, when he offers to knock our hands off; to resolve with him, Job 13. 15. *Though he slay me, I will put my trust in him.* And him, Isa. 8. 17. *I will wait for the Lord*

**Discontent and Remedy.** 39

*who hideth his face from the house of Jacob*; requires no small measure of faith: when it is with us, as it was with the *Psalmist*, then to say, and do as he did, *Psal. 22. begin.* argueth grace to have great vigour in it.

5. God hereby lets them know their own weakness, to humble them. When God withdraws, the corrupt part stirs: unbelief is ready to discover it self, impatience to break forth in unsuitable expressions, and outrages; the Christian who before thought, what he could do, if assailed, now finds himself to be at a loss, and ready to sink; see how *David* expresseth himself, in *Psal. 77. begin.* as if all were gone; and is made to confess that it was his *infirmity*, *Vers. 10.*

6. And he lets them herein experience his own fidelity and power. When he gives them a full proof of their own weakness, and helpeth them to cry out to him for help; when with *Peter*, *Matth. 14. 30.* They find themselves sinking, and call unto him for his aid, now he stretcheth out an hand, to them, and upholds them, and thereby wonderfully manifests himself to them. They had never known how faithful and able

a God he is, had it not been for such an exigency. It was when the Psalmist was *Compass'd with the sorrows of Death, &c.* and he called upon God, *Psal. 116. 3.* that he Celebrates him with that Confession, *Vers. 4. Gracious is the Lord and righteous, yea our God is merciful.*

7. And herein he also helpeth others of his Children. One such experience is of great use to many, when they are in a like case. We are advised, *Heb. 6. 12. To be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* God hath recorded such experiences for our admiration, direction, and encouragement. Hereby also he makes such a Christian to be fit to help others at a dead lift, by communicating of their own experiences, for this reason Christ gave that advice to Peter, *Luk. 22. 32. When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*

8. And the tendency and issue of all this, is to advance their glory. This is Gods design concerning his Children in all their Temptations, and so in this Desertion, *1 Pet. 1. 7. That the trial of your faith, may be found unto praise, honour, and glory.* Those very Providences in which God seems so to disregard his people



### Discovered and Remedied.

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are yet a part of his counsel, by which he guides them to glory, *Psal. 73. 14. with a* and he will so manage them by his wisdom and power, that they shall in the event add to the weight of their Crown, *2 Cor. 5. 17.*

3. And God doth it many times for prevention. Not only to reclaim them from those sins which they have fallen into, but also to preserve them from falling into Sin afterward; and that these do greatly serve to this end will appear, if we observe.

1. That Gods Children are in danger of being drawn into sin; they live in a world of Temptation, and they carry about with them a body of death: there are the remains of Concupiscence in them, by which they are ready to take the impression of such Temptations as are offered to draw them aside; for which reason Christ hath given us that as a petition in our addresses to God, *Mat. 6. 13 lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* A Child of God is never free from this hazard as long as he lives in an evil world, and hath a flesh in him lusting against the spirit.

2. By

2. By Sin they obstruct the progress of the work of their Generation. There is a work that God hath called them to; but sin is no part of it, but contrary to it; and not only so, but every sin, especially such as are more bold, deadneth them, and renders them unfit for the business they are engaged in; a Believer whilst under the efficacy of any lust, is not progressive, but regressive; however God can make it serve to his after faster growth; *David* was thus all the while he lay under his sin.

3. The corruption in them oftentimes abuseth the comforts of Gods presence to presumption and carelessness. Such is our weakness whilst we are here, that we can bear but a little of the new wine of Consolation. We are like children, who, if cockered by their Parents, grow saucy and licentious. This was *David's* case in our Context: *God had made his mountain Strong*, and he thereupon grew secure, and believed himself to be out of danger, and that made him to grow wanton, & remit of that care and watchfulness over himself that became him.

4. Hence God useth such desertions to make them the more careful and fearful

## Discovered and Remedied. 43

ful for the time to come ; these become a close lesson unto them, to let them see what an egregious folly it is for them to abuse their fathers kindness, and familiarity ; this becomes a memento to them as long as they live, and they can hardly out grow it, but it giveth them an ~~item~~, when at any time a temptation offers it self : It was doubtless such an experiment as brought David to that resolve, Psal. 39. *I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not* ; and by this means there is more close communion afterward manifested between God and them.

4 To what degree this desertion may arrive ?

A. We may take this brief account of it.

1. That Gods desertions are not alike to all his Children ; nor alike to the same at all times, as there are the degrees of his manifesting himself to them, so of his withdrawing from them ; he doth not deal with all alike on this account ; some are deeper in the *Valley of the shadow of death* than others are : and the same believers are at sometimes more deeply deserted than at others. Some are

are carried through the world, as with no extraordinary raptures of comfort, so with no extraordinary depressions and terrours of soul: whereas others are sometimes ravished beyond measure with the clearest apprehensions of Gods love, and again deserted unto astonishment, under the hidings of God from them, and the desolate estate which they are reduced unto thereby: and how frequent such times had the *Psalmist*? as will appear by several *Psalms*.

2. That God never deserts his Children so as he doth wicked men; they indeed may not always discern it, but he evermore makes a very great difference between these and those. Deserted Believers are the Children of God as well then, as when they have never so much of the light of his favour shining upon them. Nor doth he at any time so leave them, as to put them out of his favour; he loveth them still, and will never cease so to do; he careth for them, and looks after them still, and they are under that conduct, by which they shall assuredly arrive at his Kingdom in the end: That is an abiding truth, *Psal 94. 14 the Lord will not cast off*

### Discovered and Remedied.

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off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance. Whereas wicked men are now his enemies, and he will forsake them for ever.

3. That God, in their greatest desertions, maintains the life of Grace in them. Whatever wounds their Graces may suffer, and whatsoever decays they may be under, by reason of Gods withdrawing his influence from them; though they may be in a swoon and fainting; yet they shall not be extinguished: they may still say as he, *Psalm 118. 17. I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord.* There is life at the root in the greatest Winter, when the Sun of Righteousness absents himself never so far from them. *Christ's Prayer for Peter*, that his faith might not fail, *Luke. 22. 32.* shall be effectual for them too. God lest *David* awfully, but yet not totally; they may to sense and appearance seem to be dead, but yet they are really alive; and when this Winter is over, and the Spring returns, they shall flourish again; the seed that is sown in them ever abides; and they are preserved by the power of God's love. *Faith unto Salvation. 1 Pet. 1. 5.*

4. There

4. There are also the stirrings of Grace in them at such a time, though it may be very faintly. It hath been a question among some, whether a Believer may not be so deserted as to assistance, as that his graces may be reduced to the habit, and all acts of them wholly cease? and sense many times will plead hard for the affirmative: and I question not, but that a Child of God may be at a very great loss about it, and not apprehensive of any such stirrings: but yet oftentimes there are manifest contradictions between Grace and Corruption in them: so it was with the Psalmist, *Psal.* 73 13, 15. but whether ~~it~~ be so or no, out of doubt the sense of the sorrow for, and impatience under such desertions, bespeak the stirring of grace, tho' under very grievous overbearings of Corruption in them: for these are not in themselves the relentings of the Flesh, but of the Spirit. All the relentings of heart in Gods Children, under the discoveries of his absenting him'self from them, though there be much of sinfulness accompanying the eruptions of them, are yet the indication of *the wrestling of the spirit against the flesh.*

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5. Yet they may be left to grievous sins under these desertions. If God withdraw his assistance from them, and do not afford his wonted influence to the graces of his Spirit that are in them, their vigour will fail, their strength will be enervated, and the carnal part in them will wofully prevail over them, and lead them into Captivity, and they shall wound themselves fearfully: Let Peter have never so much love for his Lord, and be never so resolute to stand by and for him, yet if Christ withdraw from him, he shall deny him bitterly, when a temptation offers. If God leave Hezekiah to himself, he shall sin provokingly. If David be thus deserted, he shall involve himself in one great sin upon another. Nor can it be named hardly what one sin there is, which they may not fall into, and that unto very grievous aggravating circumstances, having that one which is unpardonable.

6. And they may be utterly at a loss about their spiritual state. There doth seem to be a greater latitude in those desertions which refer to *comfort*, than such as relate to *assistance*: Gods faithfulness will not suffer him so to withdraw from

from their graces, as to suffer them to be extinguished in them; but it is possible, and consistent with his Covenant fidelity, that sometimes they lose the comfort of their good estate. Not only may the Spirit of God withdraw his Testimony, and refuse to bear his witness to their Sonship; and when he so doth, all the witness of their own Spirits will not satisfy them in the conclusion; but leave them in sad doubts and fears whether there be any thing of truth and sincerity in them; and a misgiving heart, and tempting Devil setting in, put them upon drawing of sad conclusions against themselves, whilst their own evidences are beclouded, so as they cannot read them, nor produce any argument for themselves which they dare to place confidence in, and so they are enveloped in dismal darkness; and such a condition as this is that supposed in *Isa. 50. 10.*

7. And they may be hereupon under fore Temptations to despair, and give up all hope: they may think themselves lost, and ~~refuse to be comforted~~, be just ready to sign and seal the conclusion; not only that they are unregenerate, but



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but Reprobates too, and gotten beyond all hope of mercy: was it not so with them, Psal. 31. 22. *I said in my haste, I am cast out of thy sight, and Lam. 3. 18. my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord; & Jonah 2. 4. I am cast out of thy sight.* There are indeed at such a time the efforts of Faith, but they are so languid, that they cannot tell what to make of them; although they are still such as God preserves, and never suffers them utterly to renounce or abandon their hopes in him; they shall many times utter contradictions in the same breath, which shall be a witness of two contrary principles wrestling in them: but still they know not what to make of themselves, and are fearfully tempted to despair, and ready to conclude that they can hold out no longer; and though such degrees of desertion as these, are not very frequent, yet sometimes God, to show his power, and let it be known what he can do in bringing of his to glory at last through the forest Temptations, suffers it to be so.

5. How long these Desertions may abide on a Child of God?

1. There are no certain limitations to be

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be set here, but we may take this general account of it.

1. That Gods Sovereignty is to be adored in these Dispensations. The best way to silence the cavellings of corrupt nature about the degree or duration of Gods absconding from his Children is that of *Elihu*, Job. 33. 13. *he giveth no account of any of his matters*: and if we have risings of heart against this, God will, before he hath done with us, bring us to acknowledge, that here is reason enough to stop our mouths: so he did by *Job*.

2. Yet the Desertion shall last no longer than till the end of it is attained. God aims at something by it, and accordingly, useth it as a medium in order whereunto; and consequently he will continue it no longer then till he hath done that by it which he designed it for; and this must needs be so, because God is infinitely wise, and will do nothing in vain: how then should he continue to do that which himself calls his *strange work*, any longer then there is occasion for it.

3. Hence those Desertions that are for Chastisement, usually end when we

### Discovered and Remedied.

are brought to Gods foot, and amended by them. If God corrects us for our folly, and we continue to be stout and refractory, or careless and regardless, it is not to be wondered if he proceed with us in this course: he hath therefore said, *Hos. 5. 15. I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face:* and David tells us how long it was with him in this regard, and how he obtained a return, *Psal. 33. 3, 4, 5.*

4 There are some Desertions that have their frequent revolutions: there are the turns that some of Gods Children are entertained withal: sometimes they are in the light, and anon in the dark; now they are lifted up, and presently they are cast down; and they can come to no settlement: God is not to be contended with when it is so; but if we search diligently, we may possibly find a satisfactory reason in our selves for it.

5. God will shew his manifold wisdom in bringing of his to glory; & hence acts very differently with them in the exercise or trial of their graces. If God may be glorified by us, that should satisfie us; and in this way he gaineth great glory: hence,

## §2 Spiritual Desertions

1. Some have but few of these desertions, and those also very short: and they are carried the greater part of the life in a clear light: Of such we have the Psalmists remark, *Psal. 89. 15, 16* *they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance; in thy name shall they rejoice all the day.*

2. Others have more of these at the setting out, and afterward they enjoy great serenity. God pleaseth to hold them a considerable time in the darkness before he makes remarkable discoveries of himself to them; though he give them the grace, yet they want the comfort of it; but afterwards, after humble waiting, he comes in with his wondrous light, and replenisheth them with it: they find the meaning of that, *Psal. 112. 4* *unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness; a cloudy day hath a serene sun-set, and in the evening it is light.*

3. Others begin fair, but are afterwards tried with awful withdrawing. God at first seals his love up to them, takes them into *his chambers*, and manifesteth his wonderful love to them: and after that he changeth his providence toward them, and they are carried into

## Discovered and Remedied. 53

deep waters, where there is no standing: when they have been Royally feasted with his love, they are called to the trial of their grace by his withdrawals. Such was the close of *Dauids* Reign.

4. Others have a dark time between; their beginning and ending is bright, but God interposeth a time of clouds and darkness, in which they feel no small exercise, So it was with *Job*.

5. Others are kept in the dark all their days; and possibly set in a cloud too; the Apostle speaks of some such, in *Heb. 2. 15. who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage*; and we find the *Psalms* thus representing of his own condition in this respect, *Psal. 88. 15. I am afflicted and ready to dy from my youth up.* Now in all these things God brings about his own glory, and carries on the saving good of his Children, and is not to be disputed but adored in the arbitrary conduct which he affords them, through life and time.

Proposition 2. That his so bidding from them, is troublesome and terrible to them; it is that which oppresseth, and almost sinks & overwhelms their spirits.

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There are two things that may here come under consideration.

1. We may enquire into the nature and operation of this trouble.

2. We may observe, whence it is that these Desertions are so terrible to them?

1. Concerning the nature and operation of this trouble, we may first take a general description of it, and then trace it in the effects which it produceth in the Christian.

1. Of this trouble take this general description; *It is the most distressing perplexity of Soul, in a Child of God, arising from his apprehension of Gods withdrawing from him.* We before observed that the word used in our Text is very emphatical, which is engrossed in the description, and may be laid forth in the opening of it. Here therefore observe.

1. The subject of these hidings; and that is *a Child of God*. That these may undergoe them hath been already observed & made manifest; as also that there is a vast difference between Gods hiding from these, and from wicked men; and accordingly there are also different re-  
sentments in them, both as to the things wherein God hideth, and the entertain-  
ment

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ment which they give thereunto. We must therefore carry in our minds whom it is that we are treating about.

2. We are told whence it is that their trouble proceeds; *viz. The apprehension of Gods withdrawing from them.* And here observe,

1. The foundation of this trouble is in the desertion it self: it is that which gives being to it. If God should not withdraw, they would not thus be troubled: could they always enjoy the light of his countenance, it would abundantly satisfy them, let what else will befall them. *Psal. 23. 4. When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no ill, for thou art with me.*

2. That which nextly produceth this trouble is their apprehension of this. Sometimes they are in so drowsy a frame, that God is hidden, and they are insensible of it, and so long it disquiets them not. How long it was thus with David we cannot certainly tell, but it was so till the Prophet came and roused him, *2 Sam. 12. begin.* But when once the spiritual sense is awakened, and they miss, and cannot find him, now they are distressed. And it is an usual thing for him

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him to give such a touch on the Conscience upon his withdrawing, which quickens this sense ; so he found it in, Cant. 5. 4. *My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.* And the reason is, because he ever deserts them with a purpose to return again, and this is in order to it.

3. The trouble it self is a distressing perplexity of Soul. We observed that the word signifies such a Consternation as leaves a man, in his own apprehension, without counsel or help : he is brought into a labyrinth, and cannot see his way out ; he can look no way but he is entangled, and this distracts him ; so he complains, *Psal. 88. 15. While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted.* And we have such moans, *Psal. 31. 9, 10. I am in trouble, mine eye is consumed with grief, &c.* And *38. 8, 10. I am feeble and sore broken, I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart, my heart pants, my strength fails, &c.*

4. For the quality of it, it is the most distressing. Not but that there are degrees in it, as will anon appear, but in the kind, it is the greatest of any ; there is



### Discovered and Remedied. 57

is no other sort of distress that a Child of God meets with that is comparable to it ; all are tolerable in comparison with this ; hence that, *Prov. 18. 14. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity ; but a wounded spirit who can bear ?* But this will be more evident by considering of the effects which it produceth in the Christian. Only let me premise in general, that this trouble operates diversly, both as to manner & degrees, accordingly as God hides his face from them. We must therefore consider these effects according to this diversity, and there are some that are common to all, and there are others that are proper to these and those, according as they are accommodated to their particular resentments. We may take a brief account of each of them.

1. Those effects which are common to all are principally such as these.

r. It renders their life very uncomfortable. If God hide his face, they lose their comfort and joy : if this light be withdrawn, they are made to sit in darkness ; and it puts a sad face upon every other condition they are in ; so that,

2. It takes away the comfort of prosperity

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perity. Let God give them never so much of the outward enjoyments of this life, Health, Strength, Wealth, Friends, Liberty, &c. they cannot take content in them. When they could enjoy God in and with these, then they could resent this kindness, and be delighted in them; but he is withdrawn, and what good can these do them? if one thing wanted, will eat out the Worldlings comfort in every thing else, when he hath the greatest affluence thereof; as that miserable *Haman* confessed. *Esb. 5. 12, 13.* What then must the absence of God do to a Believer, whom he relies upon as his portion? What comfort had *David* in his Kingdom, and all the glories of it, when God was withdrawn from him? See how he cries out, *Psal. 143. 7. bear me speedily, O Lord, my spirit fails.*

2. It embitters every other affliction; adversity it self is an evil which innocent nature doth not easily resent; but yet when he had God with him, he could go through fire and water, and bear it well enough, *Isa. 43. 2.* but now he sees Gods anger in the rod; affliction comes, and God is gone; and that is an evil indeed, where should a Child of God seek

### Discovered and Remedied.

seek his support under all troubles but in his God? if all other persons and things leave him, it is no matter, so God will but stand by him, he could say, 2 Tim. 4. 16, 17. *no man stood with me, but all men forsook me; nevertheless the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me;* and he, Psal. 142. 4, 5. *no man would know me, refuge failed me, no man cared for my soul;* I said, *thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living.*

3. It takes away the Consolation even of Spiritual Duties and Ordinances. These are the relief of a Child of God, when he can find none else here, Psal. 73. 17. *till I went into the Sanctuary.* If he meet with any grief in the world, he could ease his mind in his Closet, and make up all at a Prayer, a Sermon, a Sacrament, by communion with his beloved; but now, when he comes thither, he is not there; *he cannot see him as he hath seen him;* and this makes bitter Sabbaths and Sacraments to him, nor can he take rest any where.

2. It fills them with fear; there is a filial, and there is a slavish fear; the one proceeds from the Spirit of Adoption, and the other from a Spirit of Bondage and

## So Spiritual Desertions

and as there are the beginnings of the one, so the remains of the other in the Children of God: the operation of these is divers, and oftentimes very much mixt in them at such a time; the Psalmist saith, *Psal. 119. 120. My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments*; and never more so, then when under *Desertions*; inas-much as these afford occasions for this fear to be stirred: this *night* when it comes, brings its *terrors* along with it.

3. It makes them restless till the desertion be removed, and God reveals his face again to them. There will indeed be the stirring of corruption as well as grace in this disquietment of mind; but in the whole they cannot abide quiet under these *withdrawings*; nor can any thing in the world give them satisfaction in the room of that presence of his: the Spouse, in *Cant. 5.* when her beloved was withdrawn, could not lye still in her bed, nor abide within doors, but she must up and after him, nor could abuses stop her in her quest, or she be at any rest till she had found him again.

2. With respect to the several resentments.

### Discovered and Remedied. 61

ments they have of these Desertions; and these may be considered either as to their *kinds*, or their *degrees*.

1. As to the *kinds* of them, observe,

1. When they resent Gods hiding of himself in respect of his *Assistances*; so that their graces fail in the exercise of them, and they apprehend the means of grace in a great measure unprofitable to them; and instead of growing in grace, they rather wither and decay, and temptations prevail, and they are drawn into sin: the effects especially following on this, are,

1. This fills them with an apprehension of Gods anger, and is terrible to them; and indeed there is not a more fearful token of Gods displeasure at his Children than when he leaves them to sin, and withdraws his Spirit from them; we read, 2 Sam. 24. 1. *the anger of God was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them, to say, go number Israel and Judah.* How shall they be able to pursue their work, and obtain the Crown if thus left? God is angry indeed, when he lets every Grace languish, and corruption to gather strength, and carry them Captive, and they cannot but so resent it.

2. This puts them upon a diligent search after the provocation: they conclude on this, that there is blame in them; God would not have so deserted them, if they had not some way prevailed: this therefore they must find out, and they are in great anxiety of mind till they can come at it; they cry out as he, Job 10. 2. *show me wherefore thou contendest with me*; and they look into every corner of their soul, to find out the *Achan*. David therefore in this trouble of his, runs up to the cause of it, viz. his carnal confidence, *verse 6.*

3. It makes them penitently to mourn after him: it produceth in them a *Godly sorrow unto Repentance*, as 2 Cor. 7. 10. the perplexity of their souls, bringeth them to confess and seek pardon of God, *Psal 32. 3, 4, 5.* they beg of him to have his *Spirit restored*, and a *new heart created* in them, and all that is in them set right again, *Psal. 51. 10, 11.* and nothing can satisfy them till they obtain this at his hands.

2. When they apprehend God deserting them as to comfort; when he hides the light of assurance from them, and leaves

### **Disobedience and Heresies.**

leaves them in the dark about their spiritual estate, there are these effects that properly follow.

1. This makes them to call their state into question. There is an *Affiance* which is the basis of a believers consolation, and according to the degrees of it, such is his comfort in it; this is helped by Gods enabling of him to read his own evidences, and to judge of the reality of them, and by his co-witnessing with them. When therefore God withhold this, he is left in the dark about it; and the proper result of it is to be afraid whether ever any thing was right in him, whether he hath not all this while deceived himself, and built on a false hope; out of doubt this fear stirred in *David*, when he put up that petition, in *Psal.* 51. 11. *Cast me not away from thy presence.*

2. Hence it fills him with terrible thoughts about the issue. What shall become of him at last? if he hath hitherto deceived his own soul; if he hath boasted of a false gift; if he hath arrogated to himself the title of a Child of God, and there be no such thing, what shall he do? how shall he appear? he thinks of the terrible day of account.

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and if he should then be found a cheat, and if *Christ* should say to him, *I never knew you*, how dreadful will it be? and on this account the *Terrors of God* make him afraid.

2 With respect to the degrees of these *Desertions*. God doth not always hide himself alike, neither as to the graces, nor as to the comforts of his people; and hence there are divers measures of this darkness, and distress which is upon them; the lowest whereof are terrible, but yet with more activity of faith than the other. Here then,

1. If the *Desertion* be in lower degrees,

1. It fills him with deep sorrow and mourning. Let God be never so little departed, when he knows it, it produceth this in him, nor can it do less; it makes him to say, as *Psal. 38. 6. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly, I go mourning all the day long*: grief and bitterness seizeth him, and it fills his eyes with tears, and his heart with sighing.

2. It raiseth a combat between hope & fear. There is some stirring of faith, there is also a great moving of diffidence and distrust; his heart is full of tossings,  
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**Discovered and Remedied.** 65

he would hope that God will return to him again; and yet he is afraid whether he will or no: fear presseth him down as an heavy weight, and hope endeavours to buoy him up again; there is a wrestling, as *Psal. 42. ult. Why art thou cast down O my soul, &c.*

3. It puts him upon loud cries, and earnest expostulations with God; and these also with a mixture of faith and unbelief: He pleads with God, argueth the case with him, begs hard of him; so he, *Psal. 42. 9. I will say unto God my rock, why hast thou forgotten me?* he draws desponding conclusions, and eats them up again, *Psal. 32. 22. I said in my haste, I am cut off; nevertheless thou hast heard the voice of my supplications,* *Jonah 2. 4. I said I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again toward thy holy Temple.* He cries out, *how long?* *Psal. 13. 1. he deliberates with himself, and expostulates with God,* *Psal. 85. 5, 6. wilt thou be angry for ever? wilt thou not revive me?*

2. If the desertion be in higher degrees, and comes to that, *Isa. 50. 10. that he sits in darkness, and sees no light;* and this may sometimes be the case of a gracious soul, though it be more rare and

and infrequent; the effects are usually answerable; and though faith be not utterly extinct, yet its workings are next to indiscernable, but unbelief gets head, and breaks forth into amazing effects; the principal whereof are such as these.

1. It makes him to deny all the work that was wrought in him. He not only questions it, but passeth a definitive sentence upon it. He concludes that he hath plaid the hypocrite all this while; dissembled with God, and imposed upon men, and deceived his own soul. *David* had some such resentments on him, when he prayed *God to Create a clean heart in him, Psalm 51. 10.* nay, those very things which sometimes were his evidence for his good estate, and in which he could take comfort, are now turned into arguments to disprove it.

2. It creates prejudices against God. He hath, in this condition, to do with the fierce Wrath of God; he apprehends that God hates him, and is his enemy, *Job 33. 24. Wherefore bideest thou thy face, and bideest me for thine enemy; and verse 26. thou writest bitter things against me.* The very thoughts of God, which

**Discouraged and Remedied. 67**

which were wont to be his relief and solace are now his distress, *Psal. 77. 3. I remembered God and was troubled*; and he begins to call all the encouragements, promises, hopes that ever he had from him in question, and suspects the truth of them all, *verse 7, 8, 9. will the Lord cast off for ever? &c.* and is ready to conclude that he hath served an hard master; to say, as *Psal. 73. 13. I have cleansed mine heart in vain, I have washed mine hands in innocency.*

3. This hurries him to conclude himself a Cast-away. It brings him to the very brink of despair, and he is ready to vote himself not only an unregenerate person, but a reprobate; that as he never was a Child of God, so he never shall be: he is just throwing himself upon this desperate conclusion, *Lam. 3. 18. I said, my strength and mine hope is perished from the Lord*: And this puts him into a deadly discouragement, and produceth such things as these.

1. It discourageth him from all use of means: Those very Duties and Ordinances, which were heretofore his delight, are now his terrour, and he is afraid of them. What should he pray for?

for? God will not hear him: Why should he read the word? he reads nothing there but his own doom, and every thing in it speaks evil against him. Why should he go to the House of God, to attend upon the Ordinance there dispensed? he shall but encrease his guilt, and lay in the more against himself, when every Prayer and Sermon will rise up in the judgment to condemn him: he dares not approach to the Lords Table, lest he should there a new Seal up his own *Damnation*.

2. It makes him to put away all counsel and comfort, and snatch at all terrours and affrightments. David saith in, *Psal. 77. 2. In the day of my trouble my soul refused to be comforted.* Let Godly friends apply to him the encouragement of the Gospel, and lay open before him the mercy and pity of God, he puts it away from him, and concludes that these things do not belong to him: the promises are none of his, but the threatnings, and he reads his own doom in them.

3. This makes him afraid either to live or to dy. His trouble is so intense that sometimes his *Soul abuseth struggling and death rather than his life, as he, Job*

## Discovered and Strengthened. 69

7. 15. And yet the very thoughts of death are a grievous amazement to him, because he is afraid that it will but post him over to the consummation of miseries. Hence we read of those, *who through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage, Heb. 2. 15.* Only let it be observed, that though he apprehend it not, yet there are the efforts of Grace even under this distress, and sometimes he, before he is aware, *calls God his God*; and sometimes he expresseth his ardent longings, *Oh! that he would not utterly cast me off, Oh! that he would give some glimmerings of his light!* &c.

2. Whence it is that these *Desertions* are so terrible to him?

1. Here in general, let us observe;

1. That man is naturally insatiably desirous of happiness, and averse to misery. This is a congenerate principal of Humane nature, and can be no more separated from it than Humanity; the very Elective power in man involves it in it. They were the crys of nature, as well as of Grace which he uttered in that request, *1 Chron. 4. 10. Oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and that thou wouldst*

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wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me.

2. That man is a dependent Creature, and must have an object of trust, for happiness, and freedom from evil and misery. He hath not his felicity, nor his security in himself, but must have it from abroad; and if he have it, he must have an object that is able to derive it to him, on whom he may rely; else his trust will be vain, and his expectation frustrate: hence their complaint on this account, *Lam. 4. 17. As for us, our eyes yet failed for our vain help: in our watching we have watched for a nation that could not save us.*

3. If therefore his object fail him, and he have no other to rely upon, he must needs be perplexed. It is a killing thing to be disappointed in ones expectation, in which his all is concerned: and if the deferring of hope makes the heart to faint, the defeating of it must needs make it to dy in the man; especially when he sees no other course to be taken, or any other refuge where he may repair this loss: it will make him to say as he, *Judg 18. 24. Ye have taken away my Gods, and what have I more?*

4. And

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4. And the deeper apprehension that he hath of his misery hereby, the more oppressed must he needs be. It is certain that according as men apprehend the good or evil they are concerned in, they will be proportionably affected with it; for the affections are moved by the will, according to the resentment which it hath of the good or evil which are the objects of it. These things are accommodated to the rational powers which God hath put into man, and are answerably exerted by the Children of God, in whom grace doth not destroy but rectify nature. Here therefore let us take a particular account of them, as they refer to the matter before us, in the following Conclusions.

1. A Child of God hath been made apprehensive of the fearful misery under which he was by sin. This is wrought in the Heart and Conscience by the Spirit of God, in order to the making of the Children of men the Children of God; and the remembrance of it abides with them as long as they live. Fallen man is in a miserable condition, having lost his right to all good, and being fallen under a curse that involves all  
**infelicities**

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infelicitities in it. The natural man does not resent this of himself; but God, when he comes to convert a sinner, reveals it to him, and makes him to know it and feel it, and that both temporal and spiritual: hence that, *Jer. 2. 19. Know and see that it is an evil thing and bitter*: and this belongs to the work of the Spirit, *Joh. 16. 8. He shall convince the world of sin.*

2. He hath been deeply concerned to escape this misery, and obtain eternal felicity. This also hath been the fruit of the operation of the Spirit in him: for, though nature it self stimulates men to enquire after an escape, upon conviction of danger, and to use means to obtain it; yet it is God only who hath discovered the way for it, and moves the soul to hearken after it, for, by the light of nature there was no discovery of this: nor can the natural man comprehend it, when it is discovered in the Gospel: but God hath touched the heart of this man with a remorse, and an enquiry, *What shall I do to be Saved?* and made him very solicitous to obtain it: he was loth to perish, and longed that he might escape; and the

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### Discovered and Remedied. 73

terrors which he read in the threatening were so great upon him, and such was his expectation of their falling upon him, that he restlessly longed for relief.

3. He hath found the emptiness and insufficiency of every other object of trust: He hath been looking every way for relief; he hath been trying many courses to help himself, but they have all disappointed him; he hath gone to the world, and that hath deceived him; he hath looked to his *priviledges*, and they have not succoured him; he hath attempted his own *Righteousness*, and that hath failed him: he hath accordingly been broken off from all these, and dares no longer to look that way; hath resolved as they, *Hos. 14. 3. Ashur shall not save us, Sec. and Jer. 3. 23. in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and the multitude of mountains.*

4. He hath discovered the fulness of sufficiency there is in God, thro' Christ, to deliver him, and make him perfectly blessed. God hath made himself known to him in his communicable perfections, to be one in whom he may trust for salvation; and hath revealed himself in the face of Christ, as a God ready to  
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receive him, and bestow eternal salvation upon him: he hath seen that he can deliver him from all his miseries, and fill him with those glories which shall make him satisfied: he hath appeared to him, as a sun and a shield, and the author of grace and glory and every good thing. Psal. 84. 11. *As one that is able to save him to the uttermost*, Heb. 7. 21. and he hath been made to believe that all they are blessed that put their trust in him.

5. He hath utterly renounced all other trust; and placed his alone hope in God through Christ for salvation. He hath rejected the world, both men and things of it, and cast off all his own righteousness and strength, and chosen God in Christ for his portion, and said to him, as Psal. 73. 21. *Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is nothing on the earth that I desire in comparison of thee*; and hath obliged his soul to this, as Psal. 62. 5, 6. *my soul trust thou in God alone, &c.*

6. Hence his life is bound up in the favour of God: All his help is in that; he hath no where else to go; he is resolved in this, that if God do not save him, he must perish; if he be not his portion, he must have none: if God should

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should fall him, he hath no where else to repair, but must needs sink ; he utterly despairs of having succour from any other hand ; he hath no other string to his bow ; he can not go any whither else, but saith, as, Joh. 6. 88. *whither should we go, thou only hast the words of eternal life.*

7. Hence the anger of God cannot but be very terrible to him, if he hath his whole dependence for time and eternity on Gods favour ; surely then it cannot but be very bitter, to see him discover his anger, and look to him as an Enemy : this is it that he alone accounts fearful ; Psal. 76. 7. *Thou, even thou art to be feared, and who is he that can stand, when once thou art angry ?*

8. Those withdrawings of his discover him as an angry God, to his Children. They readily read wrath and indignation in them : hence the Psalmist complains how *heavily his wrath lay upon him*, in these dispensations. Psal. 88. 7, 8. *thy wrath lies heavy upon me : thy fierce wrath goeth over me.*

9 Hence proportionably to their apprehension of this wrath, must their distress be : As they count it happiness complete.

Compleat to have this God their friend  
 and father, so that it is the top of misery  
 to have him for their enemy : and the  
 more of comfort they have ever felt in  
 communion with him, the more oppres-  
 sing must his withdrawing be : hence  
 that, *Job 31. 23. Destruction from God*  
*was a terror to me, and by reason of his*  
*highness I could not endure.* Christ is his  
 life, *Col 3. 4* And if his life have de-  
 serted him, what shall he do ? whither  
 shall he go ? he knows not how to live  
 at present without him ; if his God be  
 gone, he crys out as, *Psal. 38. 10. My*  
*heart pants, my strength fails me.* He is  
 desolate and bereaved, and because a  
 his hope for eternity is bound up in God  
 if he is brought into fear whether ever  
 he will return again, he is at a loss about  
 his interest in him, and suspects whether  
 he hath not cast him off for ever ; the  
 very thoughts of losing these glorious  
 refreshments, and pleasures, and joys that  
 are in his presence, and at his right hand  
 for evermore, and undergoing those  
 miseries which he hath had an apprehen-  
 sion of, which are the portion of those  
 that must be eternally separated from his  
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## Discovered and Remedied. 77.

conception. None can apprehend or believe it, but the Soul that feels it; nor can he express it to others, so bitter & dreadful it is: and he may well cry out as the Church doth, in Lam. 1. 12. *Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like my sorrow.*

### U S E. I. For INFORMATION in a few particulars.

1. Learn hence what a foolish thing it is for the Children of God, to nourish in themselves carnal confidence, & security. We ought indeed to live in the exercise of Faith, and labour always to strengthen and establish it; but there is a *Presumption* which the best are in hazard of, and if they reckon it to be a strong faith, they grievously mistake themselves. For a believer, when he finds his heart engaged, to think himself Temptation proof, and be thereupon adventurous beyond a Call; or because he now stands in the light of Gods countenance, to conclude that he shall never be beclouded again, is carnal confidence: and the Doctrine before us will discover the folly of it, if we consider;

1. That there is a vast difference between this and faith in exercise. And to  
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make this evident we have need to take notice only of this, viz. *That faith is always accompanied, in its exercise with holy fear*: a Child of God dares indeed to trust in him; but he knows that this faith is to be sound in the use of means, and not to indulge a neglect of them: hence that, *Eph 5. 15. See that you walk Circumspectly*. Faith tells him that if he would have God to keep him, he must *look to his ways*, and not lay himself open by security. What further difference there is between these, will be seen in that which follows.

2. There is no reason for us to promise our selves that we shall never be Deserted, but on the other hand, great reason to expect it. Faith ought to be able to give a reason for its confidence, but there is none to be rendered for this, for,

1. The best of Gods people have been Deserted: So that Grace is no security against it. What hath been, may be. Except we can prove some particular immunity granted us on this account, we have no ground to monopolize any privilege to our selves, which none of the Saints which ever went before us, could challenge.

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challenge. *Job, David, Heman, Peter, &c.* were deserted, and who are we then that we should promise our selves to escape it? *What is written of them in the word of God, for our admonition.*

2. God hath made no promises to us that we shall not be Deserted. He hath indeed promised that *He will never forsake his people*, but hath not said that he will never withdraw, or hide his face from them. Nay, so far is it from this, that he hath threatened it in case, and made it one of the chastizements which he inflicts on them for their follies. Now faith must have a word on which it builds its conclusion, else it is not faith, but presumption; and a Divine faith must rely on the Testimony of God, beyond which it dares not to go.

3. As long as we live here, we are in hazard of provoking God to desert us. We observed in the Doctrinal part, that the more bold transgressions, or more gross sinful neglects of the people of God are the procurers of this, and that by it he corrects them for such follies: and we are not secure against these. We have a deceitful heart in us, a carnal part that will betray us, if it can: a vigilant

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*versary* that lieth in wait to hurt us, and we walk in the midst of snares, and traps, and pits that are covered, and if we be not the more watchful, we shall be ensnared in them.

4. Nay, God may, if he sees meet, so exercise us, when we are most heedful to our selves: for we observed, that God may do it for the farther exercise and advancement of the Grace of his Children; and accordingly dispenseth himself, in this regard, with a great deal of arbitrary liberty; so that though we take heed to our selves, and diligently attend to Gods counsels, that we may be brought into the dark; for this is presumed of such as *fear the Lord, and obey the voice of his Servants,* Isa. 50. 10. not but that the most likely way to enjoy the most of God with us, is to walk close with him, in obedience to his revealed will: however, he is Sovereign, and his wisdom knows what is best; we therefore ought not to be secure.

3. It will greatly encrease the perplexity of a desertion, when it comes unexpected. We are wont to say, *forewarned, fire armed.* Desertions are hard to bear,



**Discovered and Remedied.**     **51**

bear, when we are best prepared for them: though *Job* could say, *Chap* 3. 26<sup>th</sup>, 27: *the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, &c.* Yet the temptation of it put him too much out of frame. But out of doubt *David's* trouble was the greater, because he was secure against it; never looked for the wind to blow any more from that quarter. Sudden surprises are astonishing, and discompose us much; where as expected evils are fore-pondered, and accordingly we are laid in the better to meet with them; and they are not strange.

4. And indeed there is nothing will sooner procure this desertion, than such carnal confidence, and good reason, for there is nothing which puts a Child of God more out of frame for the due serving of God, and exercising of faith on him, or more exposeth him to be a prey to the adversary, and entangled in every temptation. If *Peter* grow confident of his strength, and on this adventures farther then he had a call, he is ensnared & taken. *Mat.* 26. If *David* thinks himself out of the reach of trouble, God thinks it high time to give him disquietments. Text. Be we then warned by others.

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examples.

examples, to take heed to our selves, how we allow such frames to grow upon us: if we do not, it will certainly cost us sorrow before God hath done with us.

2. This tells us, that it is a dangerous thing for a Christian, to value himself only upon the comforts which he enjoys in Gods presence. It is the duty of Gods people, to get and keep a clear evidence of their good estate, according to, 2 Pet. 1. 10. *give all diligence to make your calling and election sure*; and to be very solicitous on this account, is a good sign that we value the favour of God more than life: but it is great wisdom to get this so settled, as we may be able to make use of it at all times: and hence to have nothing to conclude it from but these comforts, is not safe. Consider,

3. It is true, it is a sore time with us, when we are so, and we cannot but be strengthened by the experience of it. A Child of God must needs be abundantly satisfied, when he finds himself in the arms and embraces of his Saviour, when Christ brings him into his Chambers, and spreads his banner of love over him; when he hath all the witness, seals, and earnest of the spirit afforded him: hence

### Discovered and Remedied. 83

hence that, Psal. 36. 9. *In thy light shall we see light*; By this all his doubts are answered, all disputes against his good estate are silenced; and he can rejoice in the Lord, and triumph in the hopes of glory. I seek not therefore to discourage, but would to the utmost encourage the prizing, and making the best improvement that may be of such a condition as this, whensoever God vouchsafes it to us. But,

2. What shall we do when these are lost? we have been assured that they may so be; and to what a measure this privation may arrive, God only knows: and it is our duty to be laying in for every day. A Christian ought to be provided to be able to hold out in a storm, as well as to flourish in a calm: though he wants the comfort, yet he should keep his resolution, and say as he, *Jab 13: 15. although he slay me, I will trust in him*, how this is to be done, will come to be pointed at in a following Use. Here only in general, let me offer thus *imagine*. let us not only boast, though there is great reason to boast, in the comfort of Gods presence with us, but let us labour to be acquainted with our grounds of

of *Assurance*; that it is undoubtedly the  
*Light of his countenance* that we do at pre-  
 sent enjoy, and that there is no mistake  
 in it. If we find our hearts raised, and  
 possibly ravished, with inward apprehen-  
 sions of Gods love to us, let us not only  
 exercise our joy and delight about it,  
 but let us now take a distinct view of  
 that which may evidence it to be real,  
 and not a delusion; if we only please  
 our selves with our present feeling, and  
 search not to be acquainted with the  
 foundation of it, when it goeth off a-  
 gain, and we have lost it, we shall be ur-  
 gerly at a loss, and not know how to an-  
 swer the accusations of a misgiving heart  
 which will charge us for having *boasted of*  
*a false gift*. If we argue only from the  
 comforts themselves, because we feel our  
 hearts warmed and refreshed by them,  
 when they have left us, our arguings  
 will then fail us; and this is one main  
 reason why many are cast down as low,  
 upon such a ruin, as they were before  
 exalted: Whereas, though the sense of  
 the comfort be gone, yet the reasons of  
 it, if they were solid, will abide: and if  
 they were once true, they are so for e-  
 ver; and may be called to remembrance  
 for

### Disorders and Remedies.

for our support, in the darkest hours of Gods withdrawing, this improvement did the Psalmist make of such experiences, *Psalm 77. 10, 11.*

3. Know therefore that if we lose the exercise of our faith, in the darkest times. We shall dishonour God, and obstruct our own obedience; if when Gods face is hidden, we also remit the exercising of our faith in him, and sink into despondency, wherein do we glorify God as we ought to do? it is a duty lying on all the people of God, to trust in him at all times, *Psalm 62. 8.* but there are times wherein God is withdrawn: and it may possibly so be, that the greatest part of our time shall be spent under these withdrawals; but we have still a work of our generation to do, and this will not excuse us from it; and there is no other living at such a time, but by the vigorous exercise of our faith, as *Heb. 10. 38. but the just shall live by faith,* if that fails, our whole work will be suspended together with it. Nay, the times of desertion are peculiarly to try our faith, and not to kill it; and if we do not so improve it, then we lose a fair opportunity: If the Spouse finds that

her beloved is withdrawn, her business is not to ly still, and give him up, and say, I shall never see him more; but to get up and follow him with resolution never to rest till she hath him again, *Cant. 5.* and they were the wings of faith that carried her: she therefore calls him *her beloved*, and argues to *it*, because she finds her self *sick of love* for him, *verse 8.*

3. Here we may see one great reason of the different frames that are observable in the Children of God. It is certain, that they do not at all times carry it after the same manner; and that neither in respect of their vigorous exercise of holiness, nor their chearful or comfortable carriage of themselves. Sometimes we shall see them very vigorous in their zeal for the glory of God, and pursuit of the work of their generation; anon they flag, and are remiss, and less watchful to themselves. Sometimes we may see them carried above all the world, and in the midst of all trials, comforting themselves in the love of God, and hopes of glory; anon drooping & disconsolate, and ready to be overborn by every little trial which they meet withal; and possibly we wonder whence it is

### Discovered and Remedied. 87.

this is, and are ready to be stumbled & prejudiced at it: but it is not to be thought a strange thing. Observe then,

1. The Christians life depends on the influence of the love of God. Paul saith, Gal. 2. 20. *I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me.* There is a double life of a Child of God; a life of holiness, and a life of comfort; the one belongs to his Sanctification, the other is a part of his Inchoate Glory: now the maintenance and support of both these flows from the Communications of Gods love to him: Not only doth God in love bestow the principles of holiness upon him as Jer. 31. 3. *I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore in loving kindness have I drawn thee:* But the upholding & acting of it, is by the same author, John 15. 5. *without me ye can do nothing.* Phil. 4. 13. *I can do all things, through Christ strengthening me;* he also is the God of all Consolation, as he is called, Rom. 15. 5.

2. God doth not always appear to them alike in the dispensation of his love to them. He indeed loves them always unchangeably; but in the application of this to them, he acts his pleasure, according to his Wisdom. Sometime he af-

fords

sords them a mighty presence, in aiding of their graces, and then *their souls set them as the Chariots of Amminadib*; but anon he witholds this, and leaves them to themselves, and then all flags in an instant, now their *bands hang down and their knees buckle under them*, and their graces are in a withering condition. Sometimes he refresheth them with his *flaggons*, and then their hearts are cheered as with *new wine*, anon he witholds these ravishing, and carries it aloof, and they are *cast down and disquieted*. Thus he will let them know, that their all depends upon him.

3. And these changes many times have their frequent revolutions. It is not only thus for once and away, but the *Sun of righteousness* now shines bright upon them, anon it is beclouded, and then it breaks out again, but presently a sible cloud interposeth. No wonder then if there are such alterations in their carriage, when there is such a change in Gods discovering of himself to them. The coming & going of the Sun makes Summer & Winter. And indeed, though it be always our duty to be in the exercise of our faith, yet it becomes us to carry



### Discovered and Remedied. 89

carry our selves in the exercising of it, suitably to Gods providence in the displays of it to us. It is the wise mans advice, *Ecc. 7. 14. In the day of prosperity rejoyce, and in the day of adversity consider.* And Christ himself gave that observation in *Matth. 9. 15. Can the Children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but, &c.* And if in these they also discover much of sinful frailty, it is not to be admired, since their grace is weak, and their corruption strong, and ready to take the advantage of an hour of Temptation to exert it self forcibly.

4. Learn hence what need there is that Gods Children should be Charitable one to another. Doth God aft his holy pleasure in his manifesting of himself to them, or in his withdrawing from, and deserting of them? There may arise from hence Temptations to wound their Charity each toward the other, more ways than one. We had need then to be very cautious to our selves upon this account. And here these *Rules* are proper.

1. Let us not envy the comfortable condition of them that do always rejoyce in the Lord. Do we see some  
more

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more dandled in the lap than others, &c, like the *Apostle John*, that beloved disciple, leaning in *Christ's bosom*, and having a more intimate familiarity with him? now let us beware of Envy. There is such a spirit apt to appear; *Jam. 4. 5. The spirit that dwelleth in us lusleth so envy.* Is not this to murmur at Christ himself? to find fault with his wise and holy managing of his own, as he seeth meet? and *shall our eye be evil because his is good?* What if he will that such an one shall have large sips of the rivers of his pleasure, whiles we are made to tast of gall and wormwood? What is that to thee or me? Let us bless God for such instances, and learn by them, that there is such a thing as rejoycing in the Lord: and how useful may this be to help us in our droopings, if we could lay aside our discontent at Gods providence in it? think; God knows what is best for me, and if I had such repasts as they have, I might grow wanton under them, and not make that holy improvement of them that they do: however, if God will glorify himself in me some other way, *His will be done.*

2. Much less let us censure such. I confess, there are some who talk high of their  
their

Discovered and Remedied. 57

their assurances, and joys, and raptures, that give serious *Christians* too much reason to suspect that they labour of some fearful delusion, in that mean while they indulge themselves in a loose and licentious Conversation; and let all such take heed of the issue; *those stolen waters may be sweet, but the dead are there.* But let us not say that these spiritual joys are fantasies, or conclude that all such as pretend to them are Hypocrites: no, spiritual joys belongs to the Godly mans portion, *Psal. 97.11. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.* And God vouch-safes to his holy ones, when he pleaseth *huge first fruits* of that harvest in this life. It then we see any such living the more holy, engaged the more strenuously in a singular endeavour to *shew forth the vertues of him that hath called them out of darkness, into his marvailous light*; let us acknowledge them to be the beloved of the Lord, and endeavour to imitate them in their holy lives, as knowing that this is the most likely way for us to enjoy more also of this blessing from Gods hand.

3. Let us not condemn them that are in the dark, and full of spiritual troubles.
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Suppose we enjoy much tranquillity, and serenity of Gods presence with us, so that we can bear up and be cheerful, and maintain a good hope in God, let us take heed of censuring and despising them that cannot do as we do. Suppose we see them very disquiet, to discover much of sinful infirmity, ready to speak in the bitterness of their Sou's, words that are very unsuitable, that savour of murmuring against God, and discontent at their condition; yea, possibly such as border upon despair: these things indeed are grievous, and we ought to endeavour their help against them; but still they call for our *Compassion*, and not our *Triumph* over them. They ought to be re-proved for it, but yet withal to be encouraged: we may say unto them, as *Christ* did to *Peter*, when he began to sink, and Cried out, *I perish*, Ob! thou of little faith; but not vote them for unbelievers, or conclude them to have no grace, because sinful corruption is too hard for them, in this juncture of desertion: this is uncharitable, and so we may condemn the generati<sup>n</sup> of Gods Children. This was the fault of *Jobs* friends, who, because he let drop some unguarded expressions, in

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in the bitterness of his Soul, presently declare him to be a wicked man; and for this it is that he complains of cruelty shown him, and he tells them, *Chap. 19. 28. Ye should say, why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me.* Let us think, what would we expect at their hands, were our Souls in their Souls stead? and demean our selves accordingly. Let us not thrust them under water, who are already sinking, but put forth an hand for their help, and offer them the best relief that we are able.

4. Let us not be too rigid in reflecting upon them that dy in a cloud. God indeed ordinarily letteth in some beams of light into the Souls of his Children, wherewith he refresheth them, after they have lain a long time in the dark, when they come to depart out of this world, for their own and others comfort; but he is not bound to this, and he can carry them through death it self, and not let them know or be satisfied, till they find their Souls fallen into the hands of the glorious Angels, to be carried by them to the Eternal Habitations. And to how great a degree this Desolation may reach at such a time, is not for us precisely to determine,

determine, but if we find such as have led holy and exemplary lives, very dark and anxious about their eternal state, in their last agonies, and possibly to express little or nothing of their comfortable hopes of their future well-being; let us adore the Sovereignty of God in this dark dispensation, and hope well concerning them, that their clouds are now scattered, and that they are now satisfying themselves with the everlasting vision and fruition of God, whom they followed hard after in this life, though in the dark. Let us therefore look upon the lives they led, and make our remarks accordingly.

5. Learn hence that perfect happiness is not to be expected by the children of God, in this world. The truth is, hard discovers to us, how unreasonable a thing it is for them to promise it to themselves here: For observe,

1. Our felicity consists in our Communion with God: He is our *Objective Happiness*: nothing else can confer it upon us; and we enjoy no more of it, than we have of fellowship with him; the Church could say, *Lam. 3. 24 The Lord is my portion*; and the Psalmist, *Psal.*

**Discovered and Remedied. 95**

144. ult. *happy is that people whose God is the Lord.* They that have no interest in God, have no title to happiness: He only can save us from the *Evil*, which otherwise will undo us; and none but he can bestow upon us the *good* without which we must remain miserable.

2. Perfect happiness must consist in perfect communion with him: it must be *full*, it must be *perpetual*; so much as is short of this, so much we come behind of that which our very nature craves to make us compleatly blessed: Perfect happiness can consist in nothing short of the fruition of our object to that degree of the fulness of satisfaction that we can desire; so that we can receive no more. In whatsoever measures the Object communicates it self to us, that are short of this, they will leave a vacancy, which must be replenished, if ever we come to rest, and seek no farther: thus the Psalmist describes it, *Psalm 63. 5. my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness*: *Psalm 16. ult. in thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right-hand are pleasures for evermore.*

3. Our Communion with God in this life is very imperfect. There is indeed

a fellowship which Gods people have with him at present: the *Apostle* could say, in 1 Joh. 1. 3. *truly our fellowship is with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*; and hence there is an *inchoate* blessedness which they do enjoy, on account whereof they are declared to be now blessed; but it is not in that fulness which our souls do crave, and our hopes grasp after. It is but *mediate* for the present; and the medium also is obscure, 1 Cor. 13. 12. *we now see through a glass darkly*: they are but *earnests* and *tastes* that we have of this love now. Our present Communion is conveyed to us in *promises*, the performance of which will not be here compleated, but this is reserved for another life; & it is by *faith* & *hope* that we have communion with him; which is a thing, though comfortable to the soul, yet inconceivably short of that which shall be by *sight*, and immediate enjoyment of him, which is the thing that we look for at his coming and Kingdom: this is the reason the *Apostle* gives of his expecting to be dissolved. 2 Cor. 5. 7. *for we walk by faith, and not by sight*.

4. And this Communion here is much and



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and frequently interrupted. It is true, it never ceaseth, but yet it is often beclouded, and so obscured by *Desertions*, that we are plunged into a sad condition, and cannot enjoy the satisfaction of our interest, but are ready to sink, and be overwhelmed, and at an utter loss: we have many solitary dark nights, which cost us many a tear and groan, whilst we miss and know not where to find him: and as long as it is so, we are a great way off from that perfect happiness that God hath appointed us for.

5. Hence let us long and prepare for the time when it shall be compleated: One would think this should be enough to make the Children of God weaned from this life, unto a willingness to be gone, to think how much they do here miss of that *light* which is their *life*. To be weary of this world in discontent at the difficulties, labour, and trouble that accompany our work, is sinful; and a Child of God should patiently be any thing that God sees meet, so he may be glorified by him; but to wish for, or at least cheerfully to meditate of the time when we shall be called hence, and accordingly to be diligently preparing ever

ry day for it ; and, from the very sense of these frequent desertions felt or feared, to strengthen our longings after the fruition of that communion with our beloved, which shall never be intermitted or beclouded, is a thing very advisable : and though it should not make us impatient, or unwilling to tarry Gods time, and do what remains of the work of our generation, yet it may safely put us into such a posture as he was in, Phil. i. 23. *I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is best of all ;* and if our desertions do but put us in this frame, they will be blessed ones in the event.

6. We learn hence, the miserable state of all ungodly sinners; the consideration of the *Desertions* which are incident to the Saints, and those that are dearly beloved of God, may point us to conjecture how it is like to be with those that are the hated of his soul. It was a remark which Christ advised them to make upon the consideration of what he himself suffered at the hand of God, Luk. 22. 31. *If it be done that in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry ?* and the Apostle hath a remark not unlike to this, 1 Pet.

## Spiritual Desertions

18. if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? let then all Unrepentate Sinners learn this lesson from the Doctrine before us: if there be such Desertions, & dreadful sorrows, that Gods Redeemed may be exercised withal: Then you that are his enemies, and abide under his Curse, if you do not timely repent, and make your peace with him, may well expect Indignation and Wrath, tribulation and anguish in his hand, snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest to be the portion of your cup. Insult not then over the mourning and sorrowful children of God: remember how the Church replied upon such, and how may they upon you, *Psalm 79, 10.* I will bear the indignation, when shall she that is mine enemy see it, and shame shall come her which said unto me, where is the Lord by God?

## USE II. For EXHORTATION, and DIRECTION, in two branches.

1. To those that do at present stand in the light of Gods countenance; their consideration of the truth in hand, will afford matter of serious and seasonable advice to such; and because all do not enjoy

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enjoy this in the same manner, or to the same degree, nor are in all circumstances alike, I shall endeavour to adapt the counsel to be offered, to several circumstances.

1. To such as have had a clear and comfortable apprehension of Gods love, ever since their Conversion. God saw meet to give them eminent discoveries of his grace, in bringing them to *Christ*, and working the great change in them, and did set the seal of it so evidently that they clearly discerned it, and they, have maintained the comfort of it still, by a continued Communion with God. There are some whom God so treats; and to such let me say.

1. Acknowledge this as a great favour, with singular thankfulness. Let God have the praise of it, do you find comfort in it? remember it is his gift, and he doth not bestow it up on all on whom he hath conferred saving grace; think how many drooping souls there are, who do truly fear God, and would give a world, if it were in their dispose, that they might enjoy the serenity that you do. And let this put you upon studying how you may show your gratitude to  
God

Discovered and Remedied. - 107

God for it; let it put you often upon making that enquiry, which David did on a like account, Psal. 138. 12. *When shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?*

2. Carry it very humbly; beware of being lifted up in your minds with this privilege. There is a pride remaining in the best; and its most dangerous effects are in respect of the best things, in the Children of God. As to poor carnal minds, which know no better, they are apt to be proud of their Wealth, Strength, Beauty, Bravery, &c. which possibly you can look upon with a great deal of contempt: but Gods Children are in hazard of being proud of their spiritual gifts, and graces, and comforts too. You will be tempted to think that there was some peculiar worth in you, which God observed, which made him to be so familiar with you: but take heed; say as, Psal. 138. 1. *Not unto us, &c.* And here consider, that there is nothing which will sooner provoke God to alter his carriage towards you, than pride and self conceitedness: remember what he hath said, Isa. 57. 15. *I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that*

as of an humble and contrite spirit: the humble carriage is the most likely course to enjoy the continuance of such a favour.

3. Walk very circumspectly. You have heard that you are not out of danger of being deserted; and that usually the great reason of Gods hiding his face, is some licentiousness in his Children; they grow remiss, and neglect their spiritual watch: such was the case of the Sponse, in Cant. 5. begin. take heed then to your selves: it is the Apostles advice, 1 Pet. 1. 17. if ye call on the Father, &c. pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. Certainly, if you would have God to walk with you, it concerns you to be very careful to walk with him: if that be comfortable, let it be an incentive to you, to beware how you displease him, by drowsiness in your watch, or by an ungodly Conversation in the world.

4. Take heed of saying, you shall never be moved. Take warning by David here; you may see in his example how dangerous a thing it is to draw such a conclusion from your present sense. God will have his Children to know, that

### Discovered and Remedied.

For the preserving of their comfort depends on his pleasure; and would have them to be expecting changes every day, and be put upon carefully providing for them. Know it, if you grow secure and presumptuous in this regard, you are in all likelihood, not far from some fearful *Desertion*: Consider, that all which you can be positive in, is only that in, *Psal. 73. 24. thou shalt guide me by counsel, and afterward receive me to glory*; as for all the circumstances of the way in which he will conduct you, it is entirely at his disposal.

5. Carry it very tenderly towards such as want this light. If you begin to despise such as are under sad wanderings, and full of their bitter complaints, your father will take it very ill at your hands: they are as dear to him as you are; and he can easily shift his Providences, and set them in your light, and bring you into their darkness; and it will be a righteous thing for him so to do, if you thus insult over them. Pity them, and adore the loving kindness of God to you the more, when you see that all his precious ones are not so favoured: and be ready to

impart your help to them at all times, as considering that you know not how soon the time may come, when you may stand in need of theirs.

2. To such as, after much darkness and distress, are gotten into the light. There are those whom God sees meet to keep under a cloud a great while: they seek him, but they cannot find him; they cry after him, but he doth not shew himself to them, so as to let them apprehend his love, and discern the smiles of his countenance to their consolation: but after long waiting, & praying, and groaning, and many a longing look; at length, he comes and darts in his refreshing light into them, with which he makes them glad, and their souls are abundantly satisfied with it: to such as these let me offer these counsels.

1. Acknowledge that it is Gods free grace that he comes at last. Account your selves well rewarded for all your waiting; and be so far from murmuring against him that he came no sooner, as to admire at his undeserved kindness that he would come at all. Let him then be entertained with all the Testi-

monies



## Discovered and Reminded,

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monies of an heart ravished with his fa-  
vour, and abundantly satisfied in his  
company: give him therefore all the  
welcome that possibly may be; express  
your gratitude to the highest: let  
it now be seen in your whole carriage,  
that this change hath produced an an-  
swerable frame in your minds, according  
as *David* tells us, he did. *Context* verſo.  
11. *thou haſt turned for me my mourning  
into dancing: thou haſt put off my ſackcloth,  
and girded me with gladneſs.*

2. Be humbled for all your unſuita-  
ble carriages under Gods hidings. It is  
now a proper time for you to be alha-  
med of your ſelves: and doubtleſs, if  
you will look back upon that hour of  
temptation, you will find enough to lay  
you low in the remembrance of it. *Da-  
vid* did ſo, *Pſal.* 77. and it is very con-  
venient, to let us know how little we  
did to procure this return. Now think  
how injuriouſly you murmured and fret-  
ted at the Providence of God, how  
wrongfully you charged him with for-  
getting his Covenant, and breaking his pro-  
miſe; how, without reaſon you forced  
your ſelves caſt away, and reſuſed coun-  
ſel or comfort; how fooliſhly impatient

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you were, and short spirited, in that you could not wait for his salvation.

3. Beware of forgetting the former times, and falling into carnal frames. You have experienced the bitterness and temptation of a deserted condition, you have tasted the wormwood and the gall, and let your soul keep them in remembrance: there is an use to be made of them, and God expects it of you; and what is it, but to caution you how you carry it afterwards: and more peculiarly let it admonish you to take heed of such things as you have by such providences already felt the smart of: Possibly you can remember what it was that occasioned the former desertions which you have felt; let this remembrance be a monitor to you, to stand clear there, to look to your selves with a special circumspection, that you precipitate not your selves into the like folly afterward: if any temptation of this nature offer it self, have this in a readiness to quench it withal, this hath cost me too dear, ever to yield to it again.

4. Labour to testify your resentment of this kindness by an answerable holy walking. How holily should they live ever

## Discovered and Uncovered. 107

Ever after, whom God hath brought out of the horrible pit, and set them upon a rock? if God hath now set you in the light of his countenance, let your light shine accordingly, so that it may appear that you have intimate converse with Jesus, that the influence of his favour is accompanied with the influence of his grace, exciting all the graces in you to a more vigorous exercise. How fast should Christians grow when they live under the refreshing beams of the Sun of Righteousness irradiating of them? the Psalmist saith, Psal. 92. 13, 14. *the cedars are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God: they shall still bring forth fruit in their old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.*

3. Be sure now to lay in for a dark time. It is now summer with you, and that is a season to provide in against Winter; and to neglect it will be egregious folly. Christ hath now taken you into his *banqueting house*; be sure to take this happy advantage to establish your faith, and every grace. Think there may come a spending time again, and how much it concerns you to be better stored against it comes, than formerly.

Consider.

Consider therefore, and suppose you hear God saying to you, as once he did to the Prophet, 1 King. 19. 7. *arise and eat, because the Journey is too great for thee.* Now lay up experiences, now record the evidences which are so clearly given you of his love to you, and the confirmations of your safe and good estate; that when other witness fails, as it may, you may have this to support you there. If you neglect thus to do, it will be no small disadvantage to you in a shock of desertion, which you cannot tell how soon you may be afresh assaulted withal.

3. To such as for the present, have more than ordinary discoveries of Christs love made unto them. There are such seasons with some of his people, wherein he makes extraordinary visits unto them, and bestows on them, not only comforting assurances, but raptures; they are as it were carried into the Third Heaven, and made to see and hear things that cannot be uttered; and though the transport may be soon over, yet the impressions of it may remain, and the soul continue under the joys of it: so it was with the Spouse, Cant. 2. 3, 4, 7

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sat under his shadow with great delight, & his fruit was sweet to my tast : he brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. To such let me give this counsel.

1. Take heed of being proud of these visits. Truly there is reason to be exceedingly glad of them ; Christ doth therein wonderfully manifest his love to the Soul : but you have no reason to be *High minded* on this account : it is a free favour, and you ought to say, what am I that he should thus regard me a sinful worm? remember that these visits are not your ordinary repast ; you must have something else to live upon. It may be you never had such a treat from him before, & possibly you shall never meet with such another, till you come to be lodged in his everlasting embraces : and if you begin to be lifted up, there is a *Thorn* ready to prick this bladder, as *Paul* had his for his prevention, 2 Cor. 12. 7.

2. Expect that there is some extraordinary either Service or Tryal near to you. Gods *Extraordinary Visits* are usually to prepare us for *Extraordinary Exercises*. The time when Christ took his Disciples with him into the mount was a little before he was to be taken from them.

them, and they had hard Service to engage in. When *Paul* was to be peculiarly used in *Christ's* work, and exposed to greater tryals than any of the other *Apostles*, he had glorious visions of *Christ*. It is good for the Children of God to *Rejoice with Fear*. Expect now to be called into the field, and to have your graces proved with great Temptations. Lay in then for it, and be sure to take down by faith, large draughts of these flaggons of consolation, which may be for suitable support under such tryals; and helping you with resolution to go through them: this will be your best wisdom, and so shall you be prepared for such an hour.

4. To such as are conducted in a middle way. Possibly you have had no experience of the extraordinary raptures, and transporting joys that some can tell of; and on the other hand, you have not encountered those distressing plunges, and dismal darkneses, arising from grievous *Desertions*, which others also have cryed out bitterly of; but your way is more even; you are not without your fears, but yet you can *hope in God's Grace*, and encourage your Souls to trust in him,

### Discovered and Remedied. 111.

him, and wait for his Salvation. And if sometimes there be a cloud that doth a little obscure you, it is not long before a ray breaks forth and giveth you light : and though you sensibly labour of infirmities, yet you are kept from great Transgression, and helped in the work of God which you are engaged in : and this is likely the condition of the greatest part of Gods Children. To such then let me offer,

1. Believe that God is infinitely wise in his conduct. Be sure that you maintain adoring thoughts of him : judge therefore that this is the best condition for you. Reckon that your father knows what is most proper for every one of his Children, and that his love manageth all these concerns. Think, this is the way in which he sees meet to lead me, and I believe it is the *right way* ; and how little cause you have to murmur that it is otherwise with some. Do not say that God deals better with them than with you : what though you do not meet with their raptures ? consider also that you are not oppress'd with their desolate tryals.

2. Be much in stablishing your hope.  
God

God hath given you a good hope; make much of it, and be always fortifying of it, and take heed of exposing it to be undermined: and in special, beware of that temptation which is sometimes urged to disquiet and disturb the minds of the Children of God, *viz.* to question the solidity of your hope, because you have not been entertained with those horrors that others have not met withal, nor those ravishings which some talk of. Know then, that those are not essential, but arbitrary. Let your care be to see that the *root of the matter* is in you, and that your hope is built upon the Grace of God in Christ, revealed in you, and is such an hope as sets you upon the pursuit of Holiness, according to, 1 *Joh. 3. 3.* *He that hath this hope in him, purifeth himself, as he is pure.* And let this encourage you to be very faithful in Serving of God, and waiting to see his Salvation.

3. And let your fear produce the greater caution in you; let not your fear disturb and weaken your hope, but serve it. Let it quicken your spiritual watch, let it maintain in you an holy awe and reverence of God, and help you



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you to look the more carefully to your ways, lest you should sin, and make you more forward and constant in *working out your own Salvation with fear and trembling*, Phil. 2. 12. Let it make you to shun all the snares that are in your way, and help you in discerning them, and excite you to *walk circumspectly*: remember it is said in Job 28. 28. *The fear of God, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*

2. To such as labour under spiritual *Desertions*. And to such it is that our *Doctrine* more directly points; and because it is a time wherein there are not a few who labour under these in a great measure, whose condition saith as he did, Job 19. 21. *Have pity upon me, O my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me.* Let me apply this advice distinctly to such: & that way may be made more clearly to pursue this, give me leave to remove something out of the way, to prevent the mistakes which some may labour of, with respect to their true and real condition; here then,

1. To such as sometimes thought themselves converted, but were mistaken in their apprehension: and now they find

find trouble, and call all in question, and suppose themselves deserted: such a case may be, and possibly is more common than we are aware of; and is very hazardous. They have possibly formerly pretended to great confidence, but now they are in fear. Give me leave to lay out the case of these, and then offer them some counsel: for the discovery of such, let these things be observed.

1. There are those that have had something of a common work on them, every one hath a *natural Conscience* in him, whose nature and office is to reflect inward, and apply practical truths to one self, and this Conscience is not at once brawned and seared: the Word & Ordinances are accommodated to meet with mens Consciences, to put them in fear, and make them solicitous: and the Spirit of God often comes in these means under which men sit, and strives, and gives them inward touches and awakenings, which puts them upon endeavours to get quiet, and though natural corruption seeks to stifle such motions, and divert them from them, and so *quench the Spirit*: yet they cannot always do so, but are put upon it to do something

### **Disturbed and Remedied. 115**

thing that may bring them inward peace, and nourish in them an hope that it shall go well with them; that they are reconciled unto God, and shall escape his terrible indignation; so it was with them, *Jer. 33. 24.*

2. But they have taken up short of a good foundation: The work hath not been carried through, but hath stopped in the way, and they have rested in something else, before they have come over to *Christ*, which hath prevented their coming: and this is a frequent deceit. The conviction of some leads them to a *Legal Reformation*: they have seen some of their actual sins, and the Law that hath been broken by them, and the threatening out against such sins written in it, but have not been led to the fountain of original sin from which these streams do flow; and so they were never concerned for a new heart, but thought if they took up a new life, abstained from those sins in practice, &c. set upon the practice of neglected duties, they should herein please God, and thereupon they have pacified their Consciences; this was the farthest reach of the *Pharisee*, *Luk. 18. 11.* or possibly their trouble.

trouble for sin hath been met with the general offer of pardon, upon believing in *Christ*, and they have entertained it with joy, as the *stony ground* hearers are represented, *Mat. 13. 20*, they accept of the offer, and now they are secure: but they never knew the utter impotency to believe which they labour of: never understood the truth of that, *Joh. 6. 44* *No man can come unto me, except the father that hath sent me draw him*; and so they rest in a faith of their own, and have not that which is of the operation of the spirit, being never humbled out of their own *Sufficiency and Sovereignty*.

3. Upon this they have thought that much assistance and comfort have been afforded them; they have engaged in moral and religious duties, and been carried to and through them with a great deal of pleasure and ease, and it hath greatly satisfied them; and they have reckoned these for influences of grace; and joys of the spirit; by reason whereof they have argued themselves, to a strong persuasion and high confidence that all was well with them, and have said to themselves, as *Agag* once did, *the bitterness of death is over*.

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4. But now they find all this to fail them, and they are brought into a deep plunge. Now they are made to see that they can do nothing: they are either left to some foul sin, or conscience is awakned to tell them, they have deceived themselves, and that they are in the gall of bitterness; that the Wrath of God is upon them, their whole profession is a meer cheat, & their building is upon the sand; and this puts them into fears, and possibly they take it for a desertion; whereas indeed it is but a discovery. In such a case as this, let me offer two things.

1. This calls you to search your selves to the bottom: the case of such hath some resemblance to that of deserted Saints: when therefore it is so, the first business is a trial of our selves thoroughly; and herein we must ~~expose our selves~~ whether ever we were in the faith, as they are advised, 1 Cor. 13. 5. whether ever we were thoroughly broken off from every other object, and brought over to Christ, and built upon him: yea, and so beg of God also to search us, that we be not mistaken in the very foundation; for an error there cannot be repaired in any other way, but in laying a

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a new, and digging deep enough for it.

2. If you have failed here, this is a merciful dispensation to you: Had God left you under these mistakes, you would have gone on securely, and dropt unawares into perdition. God hath not deserted you, but made your false hopes to forsake you, that so you might in time seek a better security. This is the way in which God is wont to bring proud legalists, and carnal Gospellers home to himself. God is not going from you, but coming to you; and these are the methods of the Holy Spirit: this is the best sign that God hath a purpose of everlasting love to you, and is now coming to draw you home to himself: for he will drive that soul out of self, and its own righteousness, which he will have mercy upon and save. But,

2. Our main business is with those that have indeed the root of the matter in them; have a principle of saving Grace, and belong to Christ, but are under Desertions. And there are two things which I shall apply my self unto in respect to these.

1. To direct them how to carry it under these Desertions.

e. To

Discovered and Remedied. 119

2. To point what is to be done to get relief under, & deliverance from them.

1. For direction how to carry it under these *Desertions*. There is a right behaviour which God expects of his Children, when he thus treats them: and it is for his honour, and our advantage, that we comply with it. And there are three things that I shall urge on this account.

1. Be sure to carry it humbly towards God. God expects it, and is now putting of this grace to the trial; let it then have its exercise, and seek to him for help herein, and for your guidance in it.

1. Adore his Sovereignty: it may be your dejected and disquiet minds, are entertaining strange surmizes about the Providence of God in this, & *leavened*, as

his was, in *Psa* 73. and 77. but know it; if you cannot resolve your selves in the particular reason of it, this is enough to silence and satisfy you, that it is of God, who can do no wrong, and is not to be contended with. *Job* was brought to this, before God had done with him: he was ready to say, *behold, I am vile, Chap. 40.* and to resolve to lay his hand upon his mouth.

2. Acknowledge his Righteousness: Possibly you may, upon enquiry, see a sufficient reason for his so deserting of you; yea, the particular provocation that hath procured it: here is enough to bring you to his foot, and put you upon humble confessing his justice and equity in his proceedings: this *David* aims at in our Context, *verse* 6. by telling us how he was introduced. But if you are at a loss about the particular occasion, yet you have always enough before you, if you are humble, to make you to say, God had reason enough to deal thus with me, and it is rich mercy, that he doth not always do so.

3. Beware of charging him with partiality. There is an envy on this account, too apt to discover it self; such as was in *Peter*, when *Christ* had told him what trials he must encounter, is inquisitive what must befall the beloved Disciple, for which he received a rebuke, *Joh. 21. 21, 22.* hence such musings are entertained: Why are these taken into familiarity with him, and I must be treated at a distance? Why do they enjoy his smiles, and I suffer his frowns? Or take heed of pining; Why should your eye be

evil.



**Discovered and Remembred.** 12

*evil, because his is good? must his love be called in question by your jealousy? or must he ask your counsel and leave how to carry it in his family?*

4. Call neither his truth nor his wisdom in question on this account. Say not, how can he bring good to me out of this, or what advantage can accrue to me by it? Say not, where is now the veracity of his word which he hath made me to hope in? how is this the performance of his promise? this is pride: Remember, *His thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor his ways as your ways, but as high above them as the heaven is above the earth.* Resolve that he is the *Potter*, and you the *Clay*, and that you will lye as *Tuch* in his hand.

2. Have a care of rashly judging your own state from hence. How ready are the Children of God in a dark hour, to cast off their hope, & repeal their evidences, and vote themselves *Hypocrites*? this ought not to be, nor doth it serve to the duty lying upon you at such a time, but is contrary to it. God expects that now you should not let go your hold of faith on him, but that you take the *faller* hold, and say as he, *Job 13. 16. I have*

*he say me, I will put my trust in him. And he, Isa. 8. 17. I will wait on the Lord, who hideth his face. And for help, Consider,*

1. It is no new thing for Gods Children to be Deserted. It ought not then to be a strange thing to you, much less an argument that because of this, you are none of his Children. This stoppt the Psalmists mouth, *Psalm 73. 15. If I say, I will speak thus, I should offend against the generation of thy Children.* As to the more remiss Desertions, it may be said to you, *25, 1 Cor. 10. 13. There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man.* And if you combate with such as are more intense, and full of darkness, yet you are not without the instances of such, who were very dear to God. There can then be no such conclusion safely built on this argument : it cannot amount to a Demonstration, since this is one part of the way in which God leads his own to glory.

2. There may be Grace where there wants light : It is true, a Child of God cannot see or read it, when the light is taken from him ; but possibly he hath read it, when he enjoyed this light : and the withdrawing of it from him doth  
not

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not make any alteration in his state, though it doth in his sense of it. This therefore ought not to beat you off from your former experiences, but calls you rather more carefully to improve them, as he, *Psal. 77. 10, 11. I will remember the years of the right hand of the most high, I will remember the works of the Lord, &c.* If Grace were gone, every time comfort and assurance is obscured, it would be sad indeed; but it is nothing so; your state is the same, though your frame be altered.

3. There may be the evidence of true Grace, where there is not the evidence of strong Grace: and reason good, for there may be faith, though not like *Abraham*, who *against hope, believed in hope*, but like a grain of mustard seed. There are the Characters of real faith, in its lowest actings; and there are the notes of the strong & vigorous actings of it: and we are apt to apply our selves in an hour of temptation, to the latter, and because we find them not, we overlook the former, and vote our selves to have none, because we have it not in such degrees, and hereby we greatly injure our selves.

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4. God may not be withdrawn as to Assistance, when he is so as to comfort : and certainly this affords matter of encouragement in a dark time. Nay, it is to be observed, that sometimes God gives more powerful assistances at such a time. When *Christ* withdrew, as to comfort, from the *Spouse*, *Cant. 5.* yet never was her grace in such vigour and resolution as then, expressing her insuperable love to him, her insatiable desire after him, and her unconquerable resolution to follow him, till she had found him again; nor did she ever give a more glorious description of him, than in that *Desertion*, *Verse 10. &c.*

3. Above all take heed of concluding your selves Reprobates. We observed, that sometimes the temptation may grow up to a readiness thus to do, and therefore it needs to be cautioned against, as a thing very dangerous : and for prevention, Consider,

1. A Soul may apprehend neither life nor light, and yet a root of Grace be in it. Though probably Grace is never totally suspended from its actings, yet they may be so faint, and the stirrings of the flesh so potent, and the withdrawings of  
Divine

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Divine light so great, that he may not be able to discern them, or upon strictest enquiry find them; and now he knows not what to make of himself: but to argue to the not being of Grace, from our not discerning of it, is not *Demonstrative*; it may be there, although beclouded as to your discerning: *David* had then a *right spirit* in him, when he sought to have such an one renewed. *Psal. 51. 10.* And if it be there, your state is safe.

2. Suppose you never were Converted, this doth not say that you never shall. Though you have been mistaken, yet this doth not Seal *Reprobation* upon you. There is Grace enough with God, virtue enough in the blood of *Christ*, power enough in the *Spirit of Grace*, and an opportunity and price still in your hands: So that put case your state be as you fear, yet your case is not desperate.

3. All the arguments that Unbelief & Satan furnish you withal for this conclusion, are precatious. Suppose you have made a great profession in hypocrisy, yet God can take away that false heart, and give you a true one. If you have had beginnings and lost them; doubtless God suffers his chosen many times to

out grow convictions, and legal purposes  
 once and again, and yet in his time he  
 returns, and doth the work effectually  
 what though you have lived a great  
 while thus, yet it is not too late so long  
 as God yet strives, and waits, & calls  
 as he doth : Nor is it of force, that now  
 you find no disposition in you, nor efficacy  
 of means and endeavours, but 'all  
 seem to your apprehension to work con-  
 trary, & you think your selves to have  
 this may also be to break you off from  
 your selves, and to make his grace the  
 more admirable. So that on supposition  
 that you were in such a condition, yet it  
 is too much for you to conclude from  
 thence, that you are undone for ever.

Be then advised to take heed of cast-  
 ing off the means, but resolve to wait  
 upon God in the constant and diligent  
 use of them : and for that end,

1. Know that this is your duty and  
 work. God hath commanded it you,  
 and you cannot neglect it without sin.  
 God, who hath appointed the means  
 of Grace, to advance our salvation by,  
 hath commanded us to wait upon him  
 in them. Conscience of duty then should  
 make you afraid of neglecting them.

2. There

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2. There is at least a *who can tell?* and that should stimulate you; whiles there is a possibility, hope is not cut off. You find an Heathen King could so argue, *Jonah 3. 9. Who can tell if God will turn and repent? &c.* and the Prophet urgeth this on Gods professing people as an encouragement. *Joel 2. 14. Who knows if he will turn, and repent, and leave a blessing behind him?* to be sure, all your reasonings against it, are nothing but the suggestions of a mis-giving heart, without any Scripture evidence to confirm them; for that pleads the quite contrary.

3. Nay, this is the way to recover out of *Desertion*, and to be supported under it. God is wont to stir up in his Children a resolution to seek, and follow hard after him, in order to his gracious returning to them: and this will be an argument of a sincere soul, to say as *David*, *Psal 63. 8. my soul follows hard after thee*; and it was in this way that the Spoule so found her beloved again, *Cant. 5, & 6.*

2. Let me now proceed to point what is to be done to get relief under, & deliverance from these *Desertions*; & here

let me premise, that though Gods *Sovereignty* is to be acknowledged, and must be submitted to, yet this doth not discharge us from our duty, nor tell us that it is vain for us to attend it: he hath therefore told his people, in his words what he would have them to do at such times: and for direction,

1. Withstand the Temptations which at such a time, would undermine your Hope. Hope is your life; *for we live by hope*, Rom. 8. 24 be therefore very tender of it, and do not throw it away or suffer your selves to be deprived of it: take heed then of the suggestions offered to put you from it; especially,

1. That never any Child of God was in your case. It is very discouraging to go in an untrodden Wilderness, where there is no beaten path: it is therefore an usual enquiry, was there ever any in such a condition as mine is? and if we think that we are led in a way, which God doth not use to carry his own in, we thereupon despond. But this discouragement oftentimes prevails upon us, for want of right consideration. Whereas, if we would enquire into the Word of God, we might find our case there eminently



Sovereignly exemplified: possibly it is a very ordinary case, but that our short spirits do magnify it beyond all bounds of reason, and so put another aspect upon it: Or suppose it a thing more rare and infrequent; yet it is not beyond the power and wisdom of God to govern it to his glory and our best good. *Jobs* condition was such in his time; and that was it which amazed and misled his friends, and drew them to hard censures of him; but he resolutely, *maintains his integrity*, and reliance upon God.

2. That God hides his face the farther from them, the more they seek after him. They read, and hear, and pray, and ponder, but still it grows darker and darker under all; and from hence they infer that there is no hope for them, ever to find him again: and hath it never been thus before? are you the first of Gods Children that have been thus treated? God in wisdom hath set bounds & degrees to the *Dissection*; and he knows what is most proper and profitable for you: but what have holy men been wont to do when it was so? How doth *David* carry himself? *Psal* 22 begin and what saith the Church in that dismal distress.

of hers? *Lam. 3. 26.* *it is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord: and God gives his people this encouragement at such a time,* *Jer. 29. 11.* *I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.*

3. That you seem to grow worse under the Desertion. You think that if God had a love for you, and intended you good by it, there would some spiritual advantage accrue to you from it; but all your Graces languish, and your corruptions gather strength under it; and no doubt, it may be so to sense, whiles God is preparing of you for the good of this trial; *the peaceable fruits of righteousness,* which are to be produced by it, are to come *a'surwards,* *Heb. 12. 11.* see what a sudden change there was with David in this regard. *Pf. 116. 11, 12* *I said in my haste, all men are liars. What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me!*

2. Take heed of mistaking those things for Desertions, which are not so in themselves. Gods Children are too apt to curse him, and discourage themselves in this regard, and so create to themselves  
needless

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needle's trouble: and Satan readily suggests to a misgiving heart, that which may perplex him on this account: in particular.

1. From outward afflictions, if some great outward trouble befall a Child of God, he presently refers it to Gods anger, and by it he concludes that now he hides his face; and as she once said to Christ, Joh. 11. 21. *if thou hadst been here my brother had not died*; so he concludes, if God had been with him, this or that evil had not befallen him. It is true, afflictions are some of Gods Rods, with which he is wont to correct his people, Psa. 89. 32. and it becomes them now to make search into their own hearts and carriage: however, God often brings them for trial and exercise, such were those that Job met withal, Chap. 1. nor are all corrections desertions, but the clear discoveries of Gods fidelity: he therefore could say, Psal. 119. 75. *I know that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.*

2. From stronger temptations. God sometimes brings temptations that carry more force in them than ordinary, and we are wofully assailed by them: it may be they are many and complicate, and

now we say, that he is withdrawn : but this may be a mistake too : if God suffers us to be tempted, and then leaves us to our selves, it is then indeed a *Desertion*, as it was with *Hezekiah*, 2 Chron. 32. 31. who being so left, fell into that which procured Gods displeasure : but if God v<sup>er</sup>ify that to his people, 1 Cor. 10. 13. *with every temptation he make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it*, it is not a *Desertion* : if he gives us grace to resist, and not to give way, it is a *precious trial*, and so to be acknowledged, 1 Pet. 1. 6, 7. *Christ himself was very fiercely tempted by the Devil, Mat. 4. begin. but he was not deserted in it.* What though you have great fightings, yet if you come off *Conquerours*, and *more than so*, will you say that you have been deserted? or if at present you can say as he, Psa. 118. 23. *thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall, but the Lord helped me.*

3. From greater discoveries of their own corruptions, and frailties : it is an usual complaint, I grow weaker in duty, I find so much deadness, wandring, unbelief, so many vain thoughts crouding in, more than ever, that methinks, instead of growing, I am withering ; and if GOD were with me, would

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## Spiritual Desertion 135

it be so? but consider, as a Christian grows more in spiritual duties, he will see more of his own vileness in them: when he did them more perfunctorily, he found less of that; for the more there is of the Spirit, the more there will be discovered of the *lustings* of the flesh, Gal. 5. 17.

3. Endeavour to put the best interpretation on the *Desertion*. We observed that God ever hath gracious designs in the bottom, respecting his Children; & it becometh us to think so, and accordingly to reduce all to such things as may encourage us. Here,

1. Enquire what was the cause of it; usually when God hideth his face, if we were observant, we might understand how it came about; and that will help us much in our judging of it. David tells us how his came about, *Contest. over. 6.* and the Spouse declareth how it was with her, *Cant. 5. begin.* by this enquiry we may come to be satisfied in the need there was of our meeting with such a trial, and the fidelity and care of God in ordering it to be so, and this will help us greatly, to bear it suitably, and to say as the Church, Mic. 7. 9. *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.*

2. From

## 134 **Spiritual Desertions**

2. From the occasion learn to acknowledge the Righteousness of God. Let it stop murmurings, & hard charges which are the most dangerous temptations under *Desertions*, the *Psalmist* resolutely maintains that under the most dismal withdrawing, *Psal. 22. 13. nevertheless thou art holy*. When we can justify God in his dealings with us, that very frame will help us to a more believing waiting upon him; if we put off our controversy with God, & lay aside all our prejudices at him, we shall be the better persuaded to wait for him.

3. Observe the operation of the *Desertion*; and be sure to do it, not only in this or that circumstance, or passage of it, but in the whole tract of Gods managing of it; if thus you do, you will find enough to humble you in your selves, and make you ashamed of the many violent efforts of sin and unbelief which you have laboured of: Let it help to mortify every carnal lust, & abase you the more, and bring you to take the greater heed to your selves: let it wean you from the world, and make you more heavenly in your conversation: and if this be the operation, you may thereby discover that  
there

### Discovered and Remedied. 133

there is the carrying on of the great design in you, and that God is still leading of you to heaven, though in the dark; and if for some while you cannot discern the operation to be any whit this way, by reason of the confusion & distraction there is in you, yet wait for it; and when you find any thing thereof, be sure to improve it as an earnest of his returning again shortly unto you.

4. Neglect not your former experiences; it is too usual a thing for the Children of God, when an hour of *Desertion* comes, to abdicate all that ever went before; time was when they thought they had sweet communion with God, their hearts were greatly raised, their graces were made lively, and the seals of Gods love were legible: but now he is withdrawn, they presently cry out, all that was before, was but a dream, there were no such things in reality. Whereas we shall find, that holy men have practised otherwise at such times; and when they were in the dark never so much, yet they would call over former transactions between God and them, and stay themselves thereby, so we observed David doth, *Psal. 77. 10.* and so do you.

**God**

## 126 **Spiritual Desertions**

God will sometimes bring his people to live on the flock, and they ought to be glad and thankful that they have one; and to help you in this, take these conclusions.

1. He that is once a Child of God is ever so. *Adoption* is one of the *unrepentable gifts of God*. *Effectual Vocation* flows from his *everlasting love*, Jer. 31, 3. and therefore it will certainly abide in its efficacy to everlasting: if then you once truly knew your selves to be the Children of God; the thing is certain and unchangeable. Why then should you change your thoughts, although there be changes in Providence, which are to be expected, and therefore can be no contradiction to the truth on which your hope is built.

2. If your evidence were once true, it is so still and this follows from the former: a believer's evidence is from the *things that accompany salvation*; and that concomitancy is inseparable: if ever you had real communion with God, and participated in his Grace, it was a witness of your good estate: and tho' the scene be now turned, yet it will be a truth for ever, that God came and



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and sealed the Covenant with your souls: and though he doth not do it now afresh, yet he did it then; and if he loved you then, he loveth you still, *John 13 1. Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end:* And this will prove it.

3. That this change in Providence, hath made no change in God. God saith to deserted Jacob, *Mat. 3. 6. I am God, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed:* he hath reasons in the management of his Kingdom of Grace in you, to alter his dispensations, but he is still driving on the same design; he intends one thing, both in his manifestations and hidings of himself, and that is to bring you to glory.

5. Strictly observe, whether there be no weak stirrings of Faith and Repentance, notwithstanding the *Desertion*; if you can discern the least motion of any Grace, it may greatly support you, because it witnesseth that he is your father, and will not forsake you, Here then,

1. Do you indeed miss him, and are you grieved at it? It is a token of Grace in the heart, that we are sensible of his  
spiritual

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Spiritual retirings from us, especially when with this sense we are sorrowful for it, and cannot bear it without bitterness; So it was with the *Spouse*, Cant. 5. 4. *My bowels were moved for him.*

2. Is your unbelief a burden to you? you find it very strong and overbearing, and it is too hard for you: you cannot persuade your misgiving hearts to resolve to trust in him, but you sink, and are *cast down*: but this is very displeasing to you; and you wish that you could believe, and condemn your selves for your irregular contents, and say as, *Psal. 42. ult. Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me?* and *Psal. 73. 22. So foolish was I, and ignorant, &c.*

3. Are there not in you restless longings for Christ? you are afraid whether he will come any more to you, but there are in you craving desires after him; your Soul cannot rest in this condition; nothing can content you whiles he is withdrawn, there is neither person nor thing that can fill up his room, or be to you in his stead: you can say as he, *Psal. 73. 25. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is nothing on earth that I desire in comparison of thee.* And as, *Isa.*

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**Discovered and Remedied.** 133

26. 9. *With my soul have I desired thee in the night.*

4. Is there not in you a love to Holiness? though you find that your strength fails you, and you can do nothing as you should, yet holiness is the thing you would fain have: the sin that is in you is burdensome, and you hate it, and are vile in your own eyes by reason of it. Can you say as he? *Rom. 7. 15. What I would, I do not, and what I hate that do I.*

5. Do you not find something in you that resists this unbelief? would you not fain, if you dared, cry out as he, *Mark. 9. 24. I believe, Lord help mine unbelief?* Would you not give a world, if you had it, that you could trust in him, and wait for him? Something in you, that when you are ready to give up all for gone, will not suffer you, but gives you some check? and what is this but, at least, some faint stirring of faith; an effect of it, though under grievous oppression?

6. Are there no cries and looks under this pressure? though you are overwhelmed, and look this and that way, and see no relief, yet you call and cry.  
and

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and cast a look towards God, as he, *Psal.* 142. 3, 4, 5. *When my spirit was overwhelmed in me, &c. I cryed unto thee, O Lord ! and said, thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living.* You are just ready to draw up desperate conclusions, but yet you resolve as he, *Jenab* 2. 4. *I will look once more toward thine holy Temple.* You doubt that it is in vain, yet you cannot but groan after it : and is not this from the Spirit, who helps our infirmities, and supplies us with groans that cannot be uttered ? *Rom.* 8. 26.

7. Nay, what is the bitterness it self that you labour of ? What makes you so disquiet ? why can you not sit still and be content ? it is not because of his absence ? because you cannot see him as you have seen him, is it not the want of his company ? and if he should come again, would you not be satisfied ? would not that make up all ? if it be so, surely you have known what it is to walk in the light of his countenance, and that an unconverted Soul never did.

8. Are there not, now and then, some beams of light let in, though soon gone again ? in darkness, there is some light : sometimes you suddenly cry out, *my Lord,*

**Discovered and Remedied. 141**

**Lord, and my God :** Some promise, some encouragement darts in, and lifts up your head above water : but because it is transient, and you are presently sunk with another wave, you think it a delusion ; whereas indeed it is a gracious respite given you, to take a little breath ; and so you ought to interpret it.

7. Encourage your selves by the *Name of God*, now to go to him, and wait upon him. This is the advice given to such as *sit in darkness, and see no light*, *Isa. 50. 10.* If you cannot apply a *Promise*, so as to challenge an interest in it, yet take hold of an *Attribute*. God hath proclaimed his name to us for our encouragement : Every Attribute of his, is an handle which we should lay hold on, and support our selves by : read then in what letters he hath proclaimed his name, *Exod. 34. 6, 7.* And do you make use of all. It is possible that a truly gracious Soul may be in so great darkness, as not to be able to discern himself from one that hath no grace ; and to such God offers his *Name* for their relief under despondency, and for help, learn ;

1. That it you never were Converted, yet you may be. Here is sufficient

## 142      **Spiritual Desertions**

to support you against the desperate conclusion. He hath power enough to do it, for he is *the Lord, God*: he hath mercy enough to do it, for he is *Merciful and Gracious*: he may do it though you have long withstood him, for he is *long suffering*, there is nothing here to be objected, but what may be fully answered in his name.

2. There is enough in these Attributes to nourish hope in you, for;

1. He is a God that *delights in mercy*. Not only can he be merciful, but it is that in which he taketh great pleasure. All the contrivances of mans Salvation, which are recorded in his word, are a witness for this: and he is so recorded, *Micah 7. 18. He delighteth in mercy.*

2. He is able to deliver you. This was an encouragement to the poor Leper to come unto him, *Matth. 8. 2. If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* And this it that which our Saviour enquired of them, *Chap. 9. 28. Believe you that I am able to do this for you.* We should exert faith in his power, and that should carry us to him, because, though he is Sovereign, yet we are assured that he who is able, is also willing.

3. Jesus

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3. Jesus Christ hath purchased Salvation, He hath paid the price of it ; He hath made himself an offering for it ; it was the very business that he came into the world for : and doubtless he cannot but be willing to afford it to such as wait upon him for it ; He is not willing to lose his labour, but would have all that hear of it, to come to him for it, and he hath said, that *such as do come he will in no wise cast out*, Job. 6. 37.

4 He is still standing before you, and offering you his Salvation. You cry out, he is gone ; but though he be so as to your apprehension of his comforts and assurances, yet he is *waiting to be gracious* ; yea he is striving with you, and bidding you to *Look to him* ; and why should you say, *there is no hope* ?

5. The Spirit of God is ready to help you. If you do but *ask him*, he is ready to come, *Luk 11. 13*. *Your heavenly father shall give the holy Spirit to them that ask him* ? Why should you sink under the apprehension of your own inability to come or look ? is the e but a groan after him ? he hears and understands it.

6 God can wonderfully glorify himself in this way. You say, how can it be

be that he should regard such an one as I, who have been so deceitful & vile, and sinned against his Grace, dissembled with him? know it, he can glorify his Grace, by every of these circumstances that you aggravate your folly by. Suppose therefore, if you will needs have it to be so, that you have been deceived, and dare not lay claim to the promise, yet here is enough in his Name to help you to seek and wait for him.

3. Resolve then to adventure your selves upon God. Run into his Name; you are encouraged so to do, *Prov. 18. 10. The Name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.* And therefore if you find such resolutions stirring in you, nourish and prosecute them. Thus, by renewing Faith and Repentance, you shall, Grace assisting, recover the light of Gods countenance, and have your mourning turned into dance; your sackcloth shall be put off, and you shall be girded with gladness.

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F I N I S.

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147

audiebant. Idem §2.8. Et cum vino  
§17.13. audiebat, et tunc.

Exer. 17. 13. audierit, וְשָׁמְרָה & timebunt.  
וְשָׁמְרָה 4 14. וְשָׁמְרָה & timebunt Cum

Yoshio Ichio 4-14, Minami & Maieru (Jim)

et Afasoreib notit quatuor esse defetitia,  
omnis inde perenda. quia hic plura maxime.

אמנם & ויראו אליהם אהר'ם. 7. 17. תחזק

Удѣлъ 105. Е. 1. Р. 28. 1871 & 11-

Mat. 23. 15. Sennel 4. 7. 1879. Ec

tem Pellaxi. & 7.7.1877 & tinuere